

MAKING THE PERSONAL POLITICAL:

A Dwelling-Oriented Feminist Approach Towards
Wellbeing and Wellbeing Research

*Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool
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Note to examiners

This thesis is presented as a '*PhD Structured as Papers*'. Its format and content complies with the [postgraduate research code of practice](#), specifically appendix 7-Annexe 1 and 2, as well as the 'University of Liverpool Management School Guidelines – 'PhDs Structured as Papers' from 22.07.2019.

As a 'PhD Structured as Papers', the main body of this thesis comprises three independently written chapters, one of which has been published, another one which has been accepted for publication, and a third which is under review (not a requirement).

Declaration

This thesis is submitted to the University of Liverpool in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

The work presented (including data generated and data analysis) was carried out by the author.

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Abstract

“Making the Personal Political: A Dwelling-Oriented Feminist Approach Towards Wellbeing and Wellbeing Research”

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Overall, this thesis is concerned about what makes who feel good and function well, by offering an epistemological, methodological and theoretical framework for wellbeing research. To mobilise these ideas, throughout this thesis I build on and contribute to three sets of literatures: i) relational wellbeing is the understanding that being and becoming well is a process of unfolding possibilities with other human and non-human actors and environments across multiple scales of people, places and power (Atkinson et al., 2017), ii) feminist version of dwelling challenges the dichotic assumptions of wellbeing and dwelling (like ill/healthy, outward/inward, alone/together, nature/culture) and argues that we need to engage in the in-between spaces of these spectrums to develop wellbeing possibilities (Todres & Galvin, 2010), and iii) feminist epistemologies and theory are critical about the way that we usually produce knowledge around who is deemed healthy or functional and looks at tools to challenge these power dynamics (Ahmed, 2017).

I bring these literatures in conversation with questions pertaining to mental health and wellbeing and their interface with political precarity, austerity, and home (Hall, 2018). I understand home as a nexus or site where a variety of different trajectories and scales (like the intimate, socio-material, economic, historical or political) come together, jump across one another, and are, in the process of researching them, explicitly brought to the fore in the form of personal stories and idiosyncratic experiences. The main body of this thesis comprises three articles: i) a conceptual engagement with wellbeing epistemologies, ii)

an empirical study that looks into the experiences of 18 mental health service users through an arts-based method called Story Houses, and iii) another empirical study that combines Story Houses with interviews of 14 community land trust activists, a type of social housing. My empirical findings together with the theoretical underpinnings put forward an integrative, cross-scalar framework for thinking about wellbeing in a web of wider persisting inequalities, and socio-political and environmental changes.

CHAPTER 1

Wellbeing and Wellbeing Research: An Introduction

1.1 What is this about?

In the UK approximately 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem each year (McManus et al., 2007) while a third of the population will experience a diagnosable mental health condition at least once in their life (Rose, 2019). Despite these depressing numbers, only 1 in 8 adults with a mental health problem is currently receiving treatment. A recent ONS¹ survey (2019) further found that people with the lowest wellbeing are most likely to: self-report very bad or bad health, be economically inactive with long-term illness or disability, be middle-aged, be single, separated, widowed or divorced, be renters, have no or basic education; all showing that wellbeing is more than just mental health and tightly coupled to other factors. The NHS Five Year Forward View (2019 [2017]) responds to what is commonly referred to as a ‘mental health crisis’ (Rose, 2019):

“England is diverse both in its population and care delivery so [we need to] support and test plural models in different parts of the country... Increasingly we need to manage systems – networks of care – not just organisations... Yet sometimes the health service has been prone to operating a ‘factory’ model of care and repair, with limited engagement with the wider community, a short-sighted approach to partnerships, and underdeveloped advocacy and action on the broader influencers of health and wellbeing. As a result, we have not fully harnessed the renewable energy represented by patients and communities.” (NHS, 2019[2017])

With heightening public awareness of the pressing needs to tackle mental health collaboratively and outside the confines of the health and care sector, in recent years ‘wellbeing’ has become a real buzzword across policy makers, businesses and media (Cederström & Spicer, 2015). But definitions of what wellbeing actually is are far from clear, although we can agree that it has something to do with feeling good and functioning well (Sointu, 2005). What is clear is that wellbeing can mean many different things for many different people in many different contexts (Alexandrova,

¹ The UK’s Office for National Statistics

2015). Maybe a better way to start off then is by way of delineation and exploring what wellbeing (at least in this thesis) is *not* about:

- Wellbeing is not just the absence of illness or the eradication of a pre-defined 'deficit' (Kearns & Moon, 2002; Rose, 2019),
- "Wellbeing is not a beach you go and lie on" (Marcs cited in Dodge et al., 2012, p. 230), that is to say wellbeing is not just a chain of momentary happiness or an elusive pot of gold at the end of a happiness rainbow (Keyes, 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2001); in other words, wellbeing is not an outcome in and of itself (White, 2010, 2017),
- Wellbeing is not a matter of pulling your socks up, cannot be bought in a bottle and is not 'just a thought away', as various corporate and capitalist wellness campaigns make people believe (Pickering, 2007; Searle, 2008),
- Wellbeing is not a tool for manipulating citizens, patients and employees to conform with what the state, the health system or the employer deem appropriately healthy and conformingly functioning (Ahmed, 2010; Cederström & Spicer, 2015; Dahlberg, Todres & Galvin, 2009),
- Wellbeing is not a matter of adding up all of the different components and molecules that 'typically' make 'most' people well (Atkinson, 2013).

So, what is wellbeing then? In this thesis, I build on a relational understanding of wellbeing, where being and becoming well is constantly unfolding with other human and non-human actors and environments across multiple scales of people, places and power (Atkinson et al, 2017; Smith & Reid, 2018). Relational approaches to wellbeing criticise the idea that wellbeing can be achieved by ticking off a list of pre-defined categories of what a 'good' life ought to look like for an individual. Relational approaches further argue against the idea that wellbeing can be separated from the communities, environments, and socio-political situations within which people are situated. In a relational vein, wellbeing may be better understood as an environment or a process that emerges out of various interactions within time and space (Atkinson 2013; Atkinson et al., 2019; Smith & Reid, 2018; White, 2010, 2017).

1.1.1 The personal is political

One of the key underlying premises of this thesis, one that I shall return to in various direct and indirect ways throughout, is that the *personal is political* (Hanisch, 1969), and that the home is a complex nexus where the personal and political meet in conversation (Blunt & Dowling, 2010; Hall, 2018). What I mean by that in the context of wellbeing is that in order to fully understand how possibilities of wellbeing play out, the focus of attention cannot be on a single unit of analysis or a defined variable; we cannot look at the individual as a hermeneutically sealed off unit for whom social context acts merely as white noise (Campbell & Cornish, 2014).

To illustrate, Sir Michael Marmot starts off his book 'The Health Gap' (2015) with a captivating example of his experiences in a psychiatric ward in Australia in the 1960s: a depressed woman enters the clinic, she says: "Oh doctor...my husband is drinking again and beating me, my son is back in prison, my teenage daughter pregnant, and I cry most days, have no energy, difficulty sleeping. I feel life is not worth living" (p.1). Marmot recounts that, at the time, all the doctor was able to say or able to know was how to diagnose 'a red pill-deficiency' (p.2), resulting in her changing from her 'blue pills'. But for Marmot "it seemed startlingly obvious that her depression was related to her life circumstances" (p.2) and that red or blue pills could only address the symptoms but not the causes of the woman's depression. Since Marmot's influential Whitehall studies on the social determinants of health (Marmot et al., 1991), there have been other studies that have shown how depression correlates strongly with socio-economic inequalities, political uncertainty and one's immediate physical and social surroundings (see e.g. Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). In short: how well we feel is not (only) a matter of our own inner dispositions but is also indicative of external structures that determine one's chances of a 'good' life.

Feminists have long been aware of this, claiming that women (and by extension other marginalised and disenfranchised groups) are "messed over, not messed up" (Hanisch, 1969, p. 2.). Ahmed (2017) echoes this sentiment: "There is no question: it is personal. The personal is structural. I learned that you can be hit by a structure;

you can be bruised by a structure” (p. 30). The processes of hitting and bruising shape my understanding of how bodies and corporeality cannot be divorced from processes of being and becoming well in the face of adversity. Bodies (bodies of flesh, bodies of knowledge, organisational bodies) can ignite collective action, by means of coming together, resisting, defying their societal odds, showing alternatives, and insisting: we matter (Butler, 2015).

1.1.2 Scales of wellbeing

In a relational view of wellbeing, wellbeing operates and emerges across different scales including the personal and political but also other, related scales like self, the home, local communities, organisations, regions, cities, nations and across the globe (Atkinson et al., 2019). This then means that wellbeing has no single ‘site’ but instead criss-crosses a number of bodies, spaces and scales. This poses an epistemological problem: how can we come to know about wellbeing empirically when it is so dispersed across these different scales? What sites can we meaningfully observe to understand how and where wellbeing takes place?

One approach to this would be to understand the different scales of wellbeing as a nested hierarchy; here wellbeing moves from the micro, through the meso to the macro and radiates out, or alternatively, trickles down. Each scale then represents a separate unit of analysis, that often corresponds to a specific discipline (micro for psychology, meso for organisation studies, and macro for sociology and political theory, for instance) (Bishop, 2015).

In a hierarchical approach towards scaling, a cross-scalar analysis would define a starting point (often that of its corresponding discipline) and then move from the concrete to the abstract, the local to the global, the individual to the social (or the other way around). By virtue of doing so, this approach can then make an assumption on how one scale influences another. Another built-in assumption of this approach is that it artificially splits different analytical sites, often in a dualistic or dichotomic fashion (although I use dualism and dichotomy interchangeably throughout this thesis). For instance, we need to divorce nature from culture, mind from body, and subject from object, so that we can fully understand and control the effects that one has on the other (Latour, 2012) (more on that in Chapter 2).

There is, however, an underlying assumption in this approach: namely that scales and entities exist a-priori, any analysis simply maps onto that which is already pre-established (Marston et al., 2015; Martikainen, Bartley & Lahelma, 2002; Sayer, 1991; Smith & Reid, 2018). Such a conception then “implies that the sum of all the small-scale parts produces the large-scale total” (Marston et al., 2005, p. 419) and also means that “(minor? reproductive?) social practices are cordoned off in their respective localities (or even homes)” (Marston et al., 2005; p. 421). By cordoning off different practices into their ‘respective’ scale (the personal in the small scales of the home, and the political in the larger scales politics and capitalism) also means that the potential for structural change remains in the hands of those purely operating on larger scales. The leveraging importance of home as an inherently social and political practice is muted in this approach (Blunt & Dowling, 2006).

This hierarchical view of scale has attracted considerable criticism because it downplays the real, everyday embodied effects of what is now called ‘actually existing austerity’ which have real life consequences on people’s mental health (Hall, 2018; Strong, 2018). But the debate on how the effect of global capitalism and austerity politics are felt on a local level and the body, have already started in the early noughties. Specifically, the term ‘glocalism’, the idea that global capitalism has an entrenched impact on the local socio-material practices of home-making, has shaped understanding of how scales intersect with one another (Marston et al., 2005, Marston & Smith, 2001; Smith, 1992; Swyngedouw, 2004). Geographers and social scientists have since started looking at scales in terms of mobile, multi-dimensional, flowing, process-oriented, situated ‘sites’ in which the ‘social’ unfolds *across* a multiplicity of entangled scales (Katz, 2001; Smith & Reid, 2018, p. 818). This stance then moves scale from a bounded singular to an un-bounding plural (from scale to scales) and from a noun to a verb (scale to scaling) (see Stephenson et al., forthcoming).

Such a move then helps to break out of epistemological cul-de-sacs of subjectivity, identity, and locale— “a space of zero dimensions” (Katz, 2001, p.1230). Instead, we can look at scales as performative expansions of that which we encounter and come to know about. This expansive view of scales then highlights how scales play out in different constellations, between and within scales and through time and space

(Katz, 2001; Massey, 2005). An expansive view of scales also goes beyond the blacks and whites of dualistic thinking, by exploring the full colour spectrum of nuances between pre-defined categories (Sayer, 1991).

In researching wellbeing, we must then come to terms with the fact that how we conceptualise scales through epistemological positions is never a neutral decision. Indeed “there is a politics to scale, and whether we engage it or abandon it can have important repercussions for social action – for how best to link social movements, for identifying cracks in perceived ‘armours’, and for highlighting social alternatives” (Marston et al., 2005, p. 426). This links Gibson-Graham’s famous collapse between epistemology and ontology (2008); how we choose to understand scale (what we know, epistemology) enacts how we can change and challenge the ways that uneven power flows through them (that what is, ontology). With this in mind, in this thesis, I therefore want to make a clear distinction between site (a spatial locale like the home) and scales (the processes of how different forces are mutually imbricated) to emphasise how the personal is already political.

1.1.3 Theoretical reference points

To mobilise these ideas, throughout this thesis I build on and contribute to three sets of literatures:

- i) relational wellbeing (Atkinson et al., 2019; Smith & Reid, 2018; White, 2010, 2017),
- ii) a feminist version of dwelling (hooks, 2015; Irigaray, 1999; Long, 2013; Todres & Galvin, 2010; Young, 1997) and,
- iii) feminist epistemologies and theory (Gibson-Graham, 2008; Haraway, 1988; Harding & Norberg, 2005).

I bring these literatures in conversation with questions pertaining to mental health and wellbeing and their interface with political precarity, austerity, and home (Hall, 2018). I understand home as a nexus or site where a variety of different trajectories and scales (like the intimate, socio-material, economic, historical or political) come together, jump across one another, and are, in the process of researching them, explicitly brought to the fore in the form of personal stories and idiosyncratic experiences (Hall, 2018). A nuanced and critical understanding the epistemological,

methodological and theoretical underpinnings of wellbeing research can help us draft wellbeing policy and practice that is responsive to and responsible for these personal stories and idiosyncratic experiences.

1.1.4 Aims and objectives

The aim of this thesis is therefore to offer an integrative *epistemological, methodological and theoretical framework* for wellbeing research, mobilised by a feminist dwelling lens, that:

- Contextualises the power dynamics of how we come to know about wellbeing vis-à-vis wellbeing research's inevitably personal and interdisciplinary backbone
- Highlights the differentiated, idiosyncratic and sometimes contradictory experiences of people's ways of being and being or becoming well
- Connects the personal with the political to show that socio-political forces cannot be looked at separately from people's everyday lived experiences.

1.1.5 Research questions

I advance my aims and objectives through three different research questions, which are each answered in Chapter 3, Chapter 4, and Chapter 5, respectively:

- i) How can feminist epistemologies and 'queer tools' help us understand who or which bodies produce what kind of wellbeing knowledge and how?
- ii) How can a dwelling lens, both as a methodology and theory, help us better understand the complexly layered lived experiences of mental health service users and do justice to the entangled, complex ways of being and becoming well?
- iii) How does the personal dimension of dwelling relate to the political discourses of housing activism, and specifically the CLT movement?

These questions have been funnelled from an extensive literature review on wellbeing and will be further contextualised and discussed in Chapter 2.

1.2 Methodological reflections

This section reflects on different methodological challenges that I encountered in the process of studying and researching wellbeing.

1.2.1 Journeys, focus, and site

For most of my PhD, my research question was very broad: what actually is wellbeing? In hindsight, that was probably both bad and good. Bad because, at times, it meant that I had no specific angle on my data collection making my whole research feel unmanageable, disjointed and without a proper home. Good because it allowed me to think holistically, follow my intuitions and collect data more inductively from what questions and opportunities arose, e.g. when my supervisors involved me as a research assistant in one of their various ongoing research projects and networks.

These projects included a project on ‘Healthy New Town’ in Halton Lea (a ‘new town’, close to Runcorn in North West England), a project trialling a ‘CO-city’ approach (Iaione, 2016) (a system of local governance that manages access to common resources democratically) in a low-income neighbourhood in Liverpool, a project with a local community wellbeing enterprise, a project with a local wellbeing shop, a project with urban community land trust activists across the UK (a type of community-led social housing), a study with mental health service users across different organisation, as well as various interviews with different community members. I was busy, flooded with opportunities, overwhelmed but energised.

But this is perhaps not surprising because Liverpool is known for its friendly local communities, political spirit and militant history (Frost & North, 2014; Southern, 2014; Thompson, 2015). During my four years in Liverpool, finding out what matters to people in terms of their wellbeing, it was sometimes hard to know exactly when I was researcher and when I was ‘just me’, someone who cares about other people’s wellbeing. And indeed, that distinction might not be clear-cut anyway (see Chatterton, Hodgkinson & Pickerill, 2010; Murray, 2012).

Whether or not my experiences with other people's views on wellbeing and, by proxy, my own view on my own wellbeing (Mallon and Elliott 2019) count as research data, the views of the following people definitely influenced my stand towards my own research and this thesis. They include the view of: a disgruntled politician, a visionary town planner, a passionate social entrepreneur, an angry local historian, a disillusioned policy maker, a critical community organiser, an exhausted frontline worker, a caring academic, a hopeful expert by experience. For the scope and purpose of this thesis, however, I was only able to include a very limited set of data (the arts-based method with mental health service user and CLT interviews), and thereby only included a very limited set of voices and viewpoints.

1.2.2 Positions and dispositions

If I were to take the 'feminist' and 'relational' part in the title of this PhD seriously, it would feel awkward to start this PhD without reflecting on my own positions and dispositions towards this thesis. By doing so, I am leaning against a rich tradition of feminist scholarship (Ahmed, 2013; Young, 1997) that acknowledges the central role of the author's personal voice, body and history in the writing of research (Rose, 1997).

Perhaps my interest in wellbeing and its inequalities stems from when I was much younger. Having grown up in a loving but dysfunctional household that simply had no language for talking about and therefore no way of *seeing* depression, anger, frustration, vulnerability and injustice. As a child and young woman, all I wanted was to be understood, was to have a language to share the way I felt with others who, too, might have felt alone, marginalised, abandoned, in different but not incommensurable ways. Growing older and finding my feet in the world - enjoying the privileges of an education and good enough financial and emotional support system around me - this need stayed very much with me but developed into something more political; an embodied kind of politics that wants to expose these injustices and give them a voice, so that we may learn to speak and understand. Inevitably then, this research is personal. Re-search as me-search.

1.3 Dissertation outline

This dissertation comprises six chapters. Following this first introductory chapter, the second chapter reviews the literature around wellbeing which contextualises and funnels into the three research questions, the third chapter is a conceptual paper on feminist wellbeing epistemologies, the fourth and fifth chapter are empirical papers on the notions of dwelling, and the sixth chapter discusses and concludes with the implications of this dissertation.

1.3.1 Chapter 2

The second chapter sketches the canvas of wellbeing and wellbeing research by reviewing the multi-disciplinary literature on reviewing. After tracing wellbeing's historic background, the reader will further be introduced to hedonic and eudemonic perspectives on wellbeing. Next the review looks at wellbeing through a psychology lens and sketches out development in the academic landscape. I will then problematise and contextualise this body of literature arguing that a focus on happiness may distract from persisting inequalities at the root of much poor wellbeing (Cederström & Spicer, 2015; Rose, 2019). I introduce a relational lens towards wellbeing (White, 2010, 2017) which addresses a number of theoretical and methodological short-comings of what has been termed the 'components approach to wellbeing' (Atkinson, 2013). Focussing on people, place and power, I then lay out how different social, political and economic environments shape and are shaped by wellbeing. I then present the theoretical underpinnings of these debates, which understands wellbeing as an assemblage and pays attention to the kind of energies that is generated in the in-between spaces between different actors and actions of the wellbeing assemblage (Andrews, 2017, 2018). Further, I concentrate on the home as a site for wellbeing, and argue that dwelling-mobility (Todres & Galvin, 2010) provides a holistic, integrative framework for wellbeing and wellbeing research. The literature review then funnels into the research questions.

1.3.2 Chapter 3

Chapter three is a conceptual paper with the title "The master's tool will never dismantle the master's house: Six 'queer' tools for wellbeing research". This paper

has already been accepted as a book chapter in 'A Modern Guide to Wellbeing Research', printed by Edward Elgar Publishing and edited by Beverley Searle, Jessica Pykett and Maria Jesus Alfaro. This chapter asks: 'How can feminist epistemologies and 'queer tools' help us understand who or which bodies produce what kind of wellbeing knowledge and how?' By answering these questions this chapter conceives a feminist epistemological framework in the shape of six queer tools for wellbeing research. I understand 'queer' as an orientation towards less proximate bodies. These less proximate bodies often have subjectivities and dispositions different from those bodies that typically produce knowledge on what wellbeing 'is' or ought to be. The political implications are that the ones in power perpetuate rather than challenge the kind political structures that are of a cause for low wellbeing. The master's tool will never dismantle the master's tools; and so feminists call for a new set of tools that question and care about the kind of knowledge we produce in academia and beyond.

These six thinking tools come together to:

- i) acknowledge that any finding is by definition incomplete and deeply situated in a specific body (body of flesh, body of knowledge, institutional body);
- ii) expose and chip away at the walls that marginalised and disenfranchised knowers bump up against
- iii) breaking up citational practices by assembling different bodies
- iv) giving up fantasies of interdisciplinary mutuality and wilfully subjugating
- v) insisting that truthfulness matters;
- vi) collapse the distinction between ontology and epistemology and bring about change by way of knowing and enacting alternatives.

1.3.3 Chapter 4

Chapter 4 features my second paper which is a methods paper with the title "Dwelling: On the design, implementation and analysis of 'Story Houses' as multi-modal research method"; it answers the second research question: how can a dwelling lens, both as a methodology and theory, help us better understand the

complexly layered lived experiences of mental health service users and do justice to the entangled, complex ways of being and becoming well?

Here I discuss methodological considerations and limitations to understanding people's individual wellbeing. This paper has been published in 'Qualitative Research in Psychology'. In detail, this article explores how dwelling—a mindful unfolding of thinking and being within the cosmos as a whole—can offer a useful lens to look at the deeper layer of mental health service users' lived experiences, specifically in regards to the feeling of 'being at home' (Todres & Galvin, 2010). To do so, this article reflects on how dwelling has shaped design of a multi-modal research method—Story Houses—that combines poem writing, working with materials and interviews in a workshop environment. Methodological implications of the method are considered in regards to dwelling in the moment, abstracting time and space, unfolding memories and thinking through metaphors. A study with 18 mental health and wellbeing service users, 10 of whom were interviewed, looks into the constant unravelling of seeming opposites like alone/together and explores the fantastical metaphor 'sea'. It does so by adapting thematic analysis to mirror a dwelling lens. As a method, Story Houses can help create, open up and invite us to dwell in the non-literal, evocative and ephemeral landscapes of human existence.

1.3.4 Chapter 5

The fifth paper is "Dwelling activism: making the personal political in the home" and answers: how does the personal dimension of dwelling relate to the political discourses of housing activism, and specifically the CLT movement (community land trust)? The aim of the paper is to bring the deeply personal and intimate notions of dwelling into conversation with wider socio-political debates around community land trust (CLT) activism. CLTs are a form of communal housing that challenge commodifying practices of home making (Thompson, 2015). Inspired by feminist literature on the notion of 'dwelling' (hooks, 1987; Young, 1997), I develop the concept of 'dwelling activism' to describe the holistic process of linking both dimensions through thinking and building alternatives, and insisting that the everyday lives of the less fortunate are reflective of wider structural inequalities (Hall, 2018). Methodologically, this paper brings into conversation two data sets:

one is an arts-based method on the intimate experiences of feeling at home conducted with 18 mental health service users in the UK, the other is a series of 14 interviews with UK-based CLT activists. The findings offer a symbiotic reading of the close entanglement between the inward-facing personal practices of dwelling like building shelter and security, and the outward-facing more public practices of dwelling, like building relations and togetherness.

1.3.5 Chapter 6

The final chapter discusses and concludes the overall contributions of this thesis. I do so by reviewing and answering the three research questions, drafting two sets of policy provocations that challenge the intersection between mental health policies and housing policies (Chambers et al., 2019). I go on to offer directions for future research, specifically in face of at least two pressing global, wicked problems that will have inevitable consequences of how we will understand the possibilities of being and becoming well with other humans and non-human: climate change and artificial intelligence. The table below summarises the overall research output of this dissertation

Chapter	Research Question	Sample/Data	Concepts	Findings	Contributions	Output
3: The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house: Six 'queer' tools for wellbeing research	How can feminist epistemologies and 'queer tools' help us understand whose bodies produce what kind of wellbeing knowledge and how?	Conceptual	Queer theory, feminist epistemology, interdisciplinarity	An epistemological framework for wellbeing research	<u>Methodologically and theoretically</u> : putting forward a set of tools for wellbeing research, acknowledging implications of how certain bodies are included and others excluded (bodies of flesh, bodies of knowledge, institutional bodies)	Accepted as single authored paper to be published in 2020 in <i>'Modern Guide to Wellbeing Research'</i> , Edgar Elgar Publishing, (Searle, Pyckett and Alfaro, eds.)
4: Dwelling: On the design, implementation and analysis of 'Story Houses' as multi-modal research method	How can a dwelling lens, both as a methodology and theory, help us better understand the complexly layered lived experiences of mental health service users and do justice to the entangled, complex ways of being and becoming well?	18 mental health service users, poems, visual, interviews	Dwelling as theory and methodology, sensitive research, arts-based research	Dwelling in the moment, abstracting time and space, unfolding memories and thinking through metaphors	<u>Methodologically and empirically</u> : developing and implementing an arts-based method that captures the complex experiences of mental health service users through a dwelling lens	Published in 2019 as single authored paper in <i>Qualitative Research in Psychology</i>
5: Dwelling activism: making the personal political in the home	How does the personal dimension of dwelling relate to the political discourses of housing activism, and specifically the CLT movement?	18 mental health service users, poems, visual, interviews and interview with 14 CLT organisers	Feminist dwelling, personal and political, housing activism (community land trusts)	Inward-facing personal practices of dwelling, outward-facing more public practices of dwelling, and dwelling activism	<u>Methodologically and empirically</u> : elucidate complex relationship between community wellbeing and wider housing policies. <u>Theoretically</u> : identifying and discussing how we may experience the personal as political in the home	Accepted as single-authored paper for <i>RGS-IGB</i> conference in London 2020 Planning on submitting to <i>Environment and Planning D</i>

Table 1: Research Output

CHAPTER 2

Reviewing wellbeing research: From
components to relations

2.1 Sketching the canvas: theoretical approaches

‘Wellbeing’ is a notoriously loose concept and scholars repeatedly point out its complex, partial, oblique, and multi-dimensional nature (see Atkinson, 2013; Dodge et al., 2012; Haworth & Hart, 2007) ; sometimes wellbeing is synonymous with ‘happiness’ (Layard, 2011) , ‘life satisfaction’ (Eger & Maridal, 2015) or ‘health’ (Schickler, 2005) which makes defining it a puzzling exercise (Gillet-Swan & Sargeant, 2015; Sointu, 2005). Moreover, as Dodge and colleagues observe (2012) any attempt to define wellbeing often ends up in a mere description of the term that is often coloured by cultural assumptions (Christopher, 1999). Notwithstanding its contested applications and conceptualisations, Alexandrova (2015, p. 220) argues that wellbeing is a ‘mature science’ in the sense that there is plenty of institutional support and because of its breadth of well-regarded and sophisticated measures, models and theories. Thus, there seems to be a general agreement that wellbeing is essentially about feeling good and functioning well. Expanding on this, the community wellbeing evidence programme of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing conducted an online survey where the most popular definition for wellbeing was "functioning well in life, for example having a strong sense of meaning and feeling connected to other people" (South et al., 2016).

The purpose of this review is to illuminate how broad the topic of wellbeing is and from which different thought traditions it has emerged and is influenced by. To do so, this literature review will firstly map out wellbeing research across a range of disciplines and trace its historic background. The reader will be further introduced to hedonic and eudemonic perspectives on wellbeing. Next the review looks at wellbeing through a psychology lens and sketches out development in the academic landscape.

I will then problematise and contextualise this body of literature arguing that a focus on happiness may distract from persisting inequalities at the root of much poor wellbeing (Cederström & Spicer, 2015; Rose, 2019). I introduce a relational lens towards wellbeing (White, 2010, 2017) which addresses a number of theoretical and methodological short-comings of what has been termed the ‘components approach to wellbeing’ (Atkinson, 2013). Focussing on people, place and power, I then lay out

how different social, political and economic environments shape and are shaped by wellbeing. I then present the theoretical underpinnings of these debates, which understands wellbeing as an assemblage and pays attention to the kind of energies that is generated in the in-between spaces between different actors and actions of the wellbeing assemblage (Andrews, 2017, 2019). Furthermore, I concentrate on the home as a site for wellbeing, and argue that dwelling-mobility (Todres & Galvin, 2010) provides a holistic, integrative framework for wellbeing and wellbeing research. The literature review then funnels into the research questions, which I contextualise and introduce in the last section of this chapter.

2.2 Researching Wellbeing

2.2.1 Wellbeing across the discipline

Wellbeing studies have gained popularity across a breadth of academic disciplines including Psychology, Economics, Philosophy, Public Health research and Human Geography. When looking at the teams of editors, for example in the *International Journal of Wellbeing*, *Psychology of Wellbeing* or the journal *Applied Psychology: Health and Wellbeing* we find collaborators from across the globe and from a range of faculties, including education studies, social policy, economics, philosophy as well as social and political sciences. Interestingly, all of these journals are open-access journals, which makes it easy for practitioner and government researchers to access relevant research. Wellbeing can thus be seen as a truly interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary discipline and as having the potential to go beyond the boundaries of disciplines and academia (Lau & Pasquini, 2008; see also Chapter 3).

2.2.2 Historical backbone: removing the hyphen from wellbeing research

The backbone to wellbeing research can be traced back to Norman Bradburn's work on psychological wellbeing and distinguishing positive from negative affect, where wellbeing is an excess of positive over negative affect (Bradburn, 1969; Dodge et al., 2012). Henry (2007) also mentions the influential work of social psychologist Marie

Jahoda (1982) whose studies, starting in the 1930s, of the everyday lives of a small Austrian community found that unemployment is detrimental to wellbeing. Jahoda identified the following five features as integral to good mental health: time structure, social contact, collective effort or purpose, social identity or status, and regular activity. Importantly, she also declared that mental health is not just the absence of mental illness but a conscious appreciation of positive functioning. This understanding has also developed in Carl Roger's humanistic psychology of the 'fully functioning person' that developed as an answer to Freudian psychology, which looks for deficits rather than strengthening capabilities, creativity and flourishing (Rogers, 1961). For Maslow (1968), flourishing, or what he called self-actualisation, is conditioned by other human needs such as food, water, shelter, self-esteem, love and belonging. Maslow's hierarchy of needs was influential in understanding the wider socio-economic prerequisites of achieving wellbeing.

More generally speaking, MacKian (2009) links developments within wellbeing studies to philosophical trends in Western society. Specifically, she observes that with the advancement of scientific method, the Enlightenment and most notably with the Cartesian split of mind from body, Western medicine dissected the body "so that each instance of disease could be isolated, measured and diagnosed" (p. 235). This reflects a move towards what has been called the bio-medical model, a binary understanding of the body that sees illness as an exception to the rule, something that needs to be 'fixed'. Bio-medical understandings of the body, however, fail to see the variety of inseparable and systematic relationships within body and mind (see also Kearns & Moon, 2002, Schickler, 2005). This explains, for example, that one can still experience wellbeing within illness. Juuso et al.'s (2011) qualitative study on women with fibromyalgia shows that running small household chores despite intense pain can restore a sense of normalcy and sense of mastery which has a profound effect on wellbeing. A participant suffering from chronic pain in Schickler's (2005) study added that dealing with her illness forced her to redefine 'wellbeing' which in turn helped her to feel a lot healthier compared to her physically healthy peers. In a study with women suffering from breast cancer, Spiegel and colleagues (1989) observed that women who were part of a support group had higher chances of survival (average time until death was 37 months

compared to 19 months in control group); this indicates that physical health is embedded and indeed inseparable from other forms of wellbeing.

In philosophy, an alternative to body-mind dualism can be found in the philosophy of Spinoza who argues that mind and body are intrinsically connected (monism). Spinoza would understand wellbeing emerging as a holistic interplay between body and mind. More monistic understandings of wellbeing seek to dispel the bio-medical model of health research and advance an agenda that understands the interconnectedness of subjective, material and relational states of being (see White, 2010).

Overall, the wellbeing literature marks a general turn away from deficit-based understandings of wellness; this is also reflected in the World Health Organization's 1948 definition of health which is "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". In spite of this, Saracci (1997) criticizes this definition for not distinguishing health from happiness or acknowledging that health is a positive universal human right. On its website www.internationaljournalofwellbeing.org, the international journal for wellbeing research, it elucidates that this development also necessitates a grammatical adjustment: whereas well-being research (with hyphen) has to do with well-being as the opposite of ill-being, wellbeing research (without hyphen) reflects the above mentioned developments and sees wellbeing as a holistic emphasis on positive and life embracing attributes.

2.2.3 Eudemonic and hedonic wellbeing

More generally speaking, wellbeing research can be linked back to two different philosophical traditions: Aristippus, who put forward a hedonic line to conceptualise human wellbeing, and Aristotle, who advocates for an eudemonic striving towards what he called the good life (DelleFave et al. 2011; Kahnemann et al., 1999; Keyes & Waterman, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2001; Schwanen & Atkinson, 2015). Henderson and Knight (2012) contend that the translation of philosophical constructs into psychological ones has not always been helpful in that the methodological distinction between hedonic and eudemonic wellbeing has been

applied too inflexibly. Subjective or hedonic measures of wellbeing have a strong research tradition (Diener et al., 1999) whereas eudemonia slowly entered the stage in the 1990s and has since yielded substantive criticism that it is not scientifically rigid enough (Waterman, 2008).

Hedonism (coming from the Greek word for 'pleasure') is fundamentally teleological in that it understands the ultimate goal in life to be the attainment of maximum pleasure. The utilitarian philosophies of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill are good examples of psychological hedonism, in that they see attainment of pleasure as the key motivator to all human actions. Wellbeing can thus be conceptualised as pain avoided and pleasure achieved; or in other words, wellbeing is when positive affects exceed negative affects (Diener & Lucas, 1999; Moore, 2013). For example, a hedonic response to low wellbeing could include the consumption of drugs as a quick but effective release of temporary pain and a reversion to a baseline happiness. As such, hedonism can be associated with short-termism, 'thrill-seeking', solipsistic and deficit-orientation; in literature it is often associated with 'happiness' and 'life satisfaction' (Christopher, 1999). Empirical studies looking at wellbeing hedonically often adapt quantitative methods and look at questions determining subjective, single-item life satisfaction determinants, like experiences of positive and negative affects, marriage and work (Diener, 2000); they also often focus on geographically defined regions, such as certain neighbourhoods or countries (Atkinson, Fuller & Painter, 2012).

In contrast, the eudemonic (Greek for 'human flourishing') approach to wellbeing looks at the human experience through a developmental lens; that is they consider the striving towards the 'good life' as an end in itself considering a wealth of subjective and objective factors (Ryff, 1989). Such understanding of wellbeing developed as a response to bio-medical view of health exemplified in hedonic approaches. This strand of wellbeing research moves away from a purely individualistic or subjective understanding of wellbeing that borrows largely from psychology. Instead, it and instead adapts a more sociological, philosophical and humanist-psychological oriented research framework. This framework acknowledges that individual wellbeing cannot be strictly divorced from its social

and material surroundings as the two mutually constitute each other (Waterman, 2008).

In terms of research methods, scholars often refer to ethnographies that strive to find out more about the complex assemblages of people's lifeworld and everyday experiences (e.g. Atkinson & Joyce, 2011; Atkinson, 2013; Campbell & Cornish, 2014). For an overview the following table sums up the two main philosophical traditions of wellbeing research. More recently, however, it has been noted that hedonia and eudemonia are both on a scale and are mutually constitutive and that a combination of both approaches could yield the highest form of wellbeing (Henderson & Knight, 2012; Keyes, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2001).

	Hedonic Wellbeing	Eudemonic Wellbeing
Looks at	E.g. regional health inequalities, subjective experiences, like happiness	E.g. therapeutic landscapes, assemblages, long-term and short-term affects
Interested in	Pain avoided, pleasure attained; finding deficits; binary	Subjective and objective experiences of wellbeing; finding opportunities; non-binary (holistic, post-biomedical)
Orientation	Goal Oriented	Process Oriented

Table 2: Hedonic and Eudemonic Wellbeing

2.3 Wellbeing in Psychology and beyond

The previous section elucidated the breadth of factors and circumstances that wellbeing researchers are considering and further introduced the two main philosophical strands, hedonic and eudemonic wellbeing, that influenced contemporary understandings of wellbeing. In the psychology literature, which has also heavily influenced the economics literature (Smith & Reid, 2018), there is an abundance of attempts to quantify and list qualities, determinants and factors of wellbeing. Some terms are used interchangeably while others use different words

to describe very similar constructs. This section introduces seven approaches that have, amongst others, influenced the academic landscape.

2.3.1 Subjective wellbeing and Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory

Although a complex concept, we can identify two main factors for measuring subjective wellbeing: happiness (the net value of negative and positive emotions) and life satisfaction (the cognitive evaluation of one's long-term circumstances) (Kahneman, 2008). Subjective wellbeing is strongly influenced by a more historical tradition in psychology that measures wellbeing as a combination of need achievement and (intrinsic) goal fulfilment (Ryan & Deci, 2000) while also accounting for relativity of experiences and culture (Diener & Lucas, 1999). White (2010) adds that subjective wellbeing is much more than just someone's individual perceptions and preferences; factors such as culture, ideology, mood and lifetime history play a crucial role in forming our subjectivity. Subjective and emotional wellbeing is thus essentially about the ways we process and experience sensory input and whether these invite rumination or exploration (White, 2010).

Ryan and Deci (2000) use their self-determination theory as a basis for a eudemonic life-style; their model includes three factors: autonomy, relatedness and competence. For Ryan and Deci (2000) autonomy has to do with a sense of motivation to fulfil intrinsic goals (i.e. not 'I want more money', but rather 'I want to become a better person'); the concept of autonomy thus entails self-determination and self-regulation, for example, not engaging in bad habits, like drinking and doing things that make you feel good, instead). Relatedness has to do with our social networks and the value of giving and receiving support from others. Lastly, competence means that one has the necessary tools and personal strengths to master a set of challenges, thus enabling flourishing.

2.3.2 Virtue based theories of wellbeing

In addition, Peterson and Seligman (2004) have looked at other virtues that help advance wellbeing; they include wisdom and knowledge (curiosity, creativity and a will to learn new things), courage (will power, integrity), humanity (empathy,

kindness), justice (fairness, social responsibility), temperance (humility, self-control) and transcendence (hope, humour, spirituality). In general, the key factors to wellbeing according to Peterson and Seligman (2004) are pleasure, engagement and meaning. However, Henry (2007) remarks that this list might be ‘too American’ in that it focuses on individual and active traits and neglects traits like patience, forbearance and more interpersonal virtues.

2.3.3 Antonovsky’s salutogenesis

For Antonovsky (1987) there are two ways in which humans thrive in adversity. The first is through sense of coherence which includes comprehensibility (being able to predict the outcome of events, not feeling like the victim of your circumstances), manageability (a sense of control and mastery) and meaningfulness (knowing that there is a purpose in life and things are worth pursuing). The second is general resilience which includes, for example, money, intelligence, self-esteem, preventive health orientation, social support and cultural capital. Together a sense of cohesion and the availability of certain resources promote the key factors for health; Antonovsky calls this concept salutogenesis, Greek for the origins of health (Erikson & Lindstrom, 2005).

2.3.4 Capabilities Approach

Another strand of scholarship understands wellbeing through what people are able to do and be, in other words, how capable they are to achieve the kind of wellbeing they thrive for; this is what has been called the capabilities approach (Robeyns, 2005; Schwanen & Atkinson, 2015). The theory has been developed in philosophy by Aristotelian philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2002) and in economy, most notably by Amartya Sen (2012). Robeyns (2005) adds that the capabilities approach is not a tightly defined theory but instead is “generally conceived as a flexible and multi-purpose framework” which explains why it has found wide-spread application across a range of disciplines including development studies and psychology (Schwanen & Wang, 2014; Shinn, 2015).

Robeyns (2011) further identifies three functions of the capabilities approach they are: “(1) the assessment of individual well-being; (2) the evaluation and assessment

of social arrangements; and (3) the design of policies and proposals about social change in society". The capabilities approach is especially interested in understanding the wellbeing of non-Western or socially marginalised communities; this is because it works from a framework that acknowledges that different people have different priorities in their life. It differs from the more traditional, psychology-inspired literature that focuses exclusively on subjective measures (e.g. on a scale from 1 to 10 how satisfied are you with your life) or exclusively on objective measures (how much money do you make). The capabilities approach looks at people's genuine opportunities to function in life. Nussbaum identifies ten of them; they are: i) life, ii) bodily health, iii) bodily integrity, iv) senses, imagination, and thought, v) emotions, vi) affiliation with others, vii) practical reasoning, viii) political and material control over one's environment, ix) play and x) other species.

2.3.5 Ryff's six dimensions of wellbeing and psychological wellbeing

Ryff's model of psychological wellbeing (1989, Ryff & Keyes, 1995) differs from previous research in that it acknowledges wellbeing as multi-dimensional and as more than just positive emotions. She specifically criticizes a purely subjective understanding of wellbeing as being too one-dimensional. Instead, Ryff and colleagues propose six measures of wellbeing; they are: i) positive relations with others which means being able to be emphatic, understanding, loving, intimate and affectionate; ii) self-acceptance has to do with being reflective and critical of oneself, and knowing one's strength and weaknesses; iii) personal growth stands for accepting new challenges, realising potential and recognising improvement; iv) purpose in life refers to the ways in which people find meaning, i.e. setting and achieving realistic goals; v) autonomy covers being self-determined and not unduly swayed by other's opinion or circumstances; finally, vi) environmental mastery describes a sense of mastery and competence to use appropriate skills and tools to function well in one's environment.

Ryff's theory synthesises and expands on a lot of previous research and there are obvious similarities with Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory. However, Ryff

approaches it from a more holistic angle, seeing personal development as a scale or gradient. She advocates for thinking more strongly about the more developmental and existentialist factors that influence wellbeing and also borrows heavily from more eudemonic understandings of wellbeing (Keyes, Shmotkin & Ryff, 2002). Good overall wellbeing can only be achieved when a person is high in both, subjective and psychological wellbeing.

2.3.6 Set point theory

Set point theory² is different to the aforementioned theories in that it does not seek to conceptualise dimensions or factors of wellbeing. It rather tries to explain why two people with the exact same lifestyle can still experience different levels of happiness. It basically argues that each individual has a relatively deterministically set bar of what a 'normal' level of happiness is for them. Any major lifetime event, be it negative or positive, will cause only temporal fluctuation of their wellbeing levels. After some time peaks or troughs of wellbeing, like people who win the lottery or people who are involved in a disabling accident, soon revert back to their baseline level of happiness because the 'new' has soon become the 'new normal'; (Brickman et al., 1978; Diener & Lucas, 1999; Kahnemann, 2007; Sheldon & Lucas, 2014). Indeed, recent research says that about 50% of our ability to be happy is genetic and 10% environmental (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006) while in their studies on twins Lykken (in Headley, 2010, p. 10) argues that 100% of our happiness is determined through genes. This leaves a rather deterministic outlook on wellbeing studies and opens up questions about the effectiveness and viability of wellbeing interventions on a community and policy level.

However, Headley (2010) remarks that set-point theory has been undergoing increasing academic scrutiny. For instance, the loss of a child or cosmetic surgery

² Headey (2010, p.8) remarks that set-point theory is referred to under at least six different names; they are: adaptation level (AL) theory, the Easterlin Paradox, personality theory, dynamic equilibrium theory, multiple discrepancies theory and homeostatic theory.

can have long-lasting effects on one's wellbeing level (ibid.). Lucas and colleagues (2004) argue that the most notable effects on one's wellbeing baseline is caused by long-term unemployment. The most convincing rebuttal of set-point theory comes from a 20 year, longitudinal study by the German Socio-Economic Panel Survey which indicated that 14%-30% of the participants reported significant and permanent changes in their wellbeing set-point (Gerstorf et al., 2008). This finding has invited scholars to reconsider the ways in which we can sustainably influence levels of wellbeing. For instance, Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006) argue that intentional activities such as mindfulness, being kind and grateful can sustainably increase wellbeing levels against the odds of genetics.

Supporting the recent developments in set-point theory, Keyes and Grzywacz (2005) also argue that ill-being and well-being are not polar opposites; a negative change might therefore affect positive change in a person's life. In other words, negative and positive affect do not correlate linearly with actual changes in wellbeing. This is exemplified in the theory of posttraumatic growth (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2014) which states that the hardship endured through trauma can sometimes open up new opportunities. This very much speaks for the power of agency that is involved in forming one's wellbeing, despite genetic predisposition or the experience of hardship and is a common catalyst for the development of relational community wellbeing (Atkinson et al., 2017).

2.3.7 Economic wellbeing

Economic wellbeing takes into account factors of the national economy such as GDP per head, household income, unemployment rate, and household spending (ONS, 2017). However, the ONS also acknowledges that many factors of wellbeing are outside the material sphere and that an increase in capital (for example a growth in a country's GDP or a lottery win) has no lasting impact on a person's wellbeing (Easterlin, 1974; Layard, 2011; Searle, 2008). Diener and Lucas (1999, p. 44) add that objective factors of basic need fulfilment (food, water, shelter) account for only 15% of overall wellbeing. Their estimation, it can be argued, is very monolithic and does not take into account levels of socio-economic and cultural differences within a country (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010) and also does not

differentiate that low-income countries tend to fare poorer in terms of wellbeing provision (Marmot, 2015). Moreover, the Diener and Lucas (1999) refer to the ceiling effect which suggests that, at least in the Western world, very basic needs go rarely unmet and that exceeding these needs has a statistically insignificant bearing on wellbeing. Again, talking about the Western world as a homogenous block of good welfare, is not taking into account pockets of extreme precarity and poverty, that we can find throughout Europe and the States (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

2.3.8 Positive Psychology and Seligman's PERMA

Positive psychology takes issues with classical psychological approaches claiming that it was half-baked. Seligman (2011) asserts that psychologists after World War II saw wellbeing only in terms of illness and deficit but failed to see the other half which was human flourishing. According to Snyder and Lopez (2009) positive psychology is “a call for psychological science and practice to be as concerned with strength as with weakness; as interested in building the best things in life as in repairing the worst” (p. xxiii). To achieve this, positive psychology adapts eudemonic understandings of wellbeing and seeks to understand the ‘good life’ in terms of mobilising a person’s positive strengths, talents and virtues to the fullest (Seligman, 2011). In European scholarship this often happens with a focus on one’s socio-cultural context whereas American positive psychologists are more interested in individual experience and behaviour (Henry, 2007).

In his theory of flourishing, positive psychologist Seligman (2012) proposes another way of measuring wellbeing, namely through PERMA. In this acronym, P stands for positive emotion and is about finding pleasurable things that make us feel good (hedonism). E is for engagement and is linking to Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) theory of flow which is about using the highest of your skills and strengths to meet certain challenges, for example in school. R is for relationships and stresses the importance of social bonds and forming inclusive communities, this is another form of social or community wellbeing. M refers to meaning and purpose and relates to the idea of finding worthwhile things to do with one’s life, such as volunteering. Finally, the A means accomplishment and is about setting realistic goals and working towards

achieving them, this can help us thrive. The core idea behind PERMA is that it can be taught and learned (see White, 2010)

2.4 Wellbeing beyond components

The above approaches have been very influential in designing research, policy and practice in health care, education and city planning (Atkinson et al., 2017; Smith & Reid, 2018). However, in recent years there has been increasing criticism and problematization regarding the psychology-inspired literature that has been characterised as a ‘component approach’ towards wellbeing (Atkinson, 2013). The criticism pertaining to this argument can be summed up into the following points.

2.4.1 Molecularisation: bodies as quasi-mechanical

Understanding the holistic complexities of human life as individual, sealed-off, separate components can be linked to the wider history of psychiatry which Rose (2019) has described as a molecularisation, where mental health has been characterised in terms of brain disorders or neuro-chemical imbalances. With the discovery of DNA’s double helix structure and a growing understanding of neurotransmitter systems since the 1930s, biologists and psychiatrists have put forward a quasi-mechanical understanding of what makes us feel good; often conflating wellbeing with health (see also Schickler, 2005). This development coincided with the rise of big pharmaceutical companies which further spawned the idea that poor mental health is merely a deficit of neuro-chemical x that can be solved with drug y. Marmot, in his book ‘The Health Gap’ (2015, pp.1,) illustrates the absurdity of such type of molecular thinking: a woman who feels that life is not worth living, who has no energy left, whose husband is drinking and beating her, whose son is in prison, whose pregnant daughter surely does not just suffer from “red-pill deficiency” (p.2).

The molecular understanding of health may even extend towards more social and community-based models of health, like social prescribing, where doctors ‘prescribe’ social activities that have measurable positive effects on people’s wellbeing (Bickerdike et al., 2017; Swift, 2017). If there is a deficit of x (community) fill it with a prescription of y (dance class). In other words, if you do 10 weeks of

dancing every Tuesday then you will feel less lonely. However, in line with a molecularised understanding of health (Rose, 2019), there is a real risk that these types of prescriptions, too, will be utilised in a quasi-mechanical, linear way to directly address and ‘solve’ what are, in fact, deeper rooted problems that require longer and more sustained interventions.

2.4.2 Wellbeing as manipulation

The component approach to wellbeing further invites quite literal tick-box approaches to assessing the wellbeing of an individual or their community. If someone’s ways of being and becoming well fall outside the scope of these tick-boxes they might be perceived as illegitimate or irrelevant by decision makers who often have a pre-conceived idea of outcomes (Kendon, Pain & Kesby, 2007). Moreover, when someone who is severely struggling under socio-economic precarity, political instability and mental illness, asking them to feel more grateful and connected or to find a sense of purpose, to ‘just smile’ is not only structurally impossible but also patronising, dehumanising and morally questionable (Ahmed, 2010; Ehrenreich, 2010; Held, 2002).

To say that the responsibility of being and becoming well lies solely in the individual is another way for governance to say: ‘it is not our responsibility’. Contemporary wellbeing practices like mindfulness, self-help books and podcasts, and the rise of health apps and technology, are all an invitation to reflect on individual selves and to look for ‘problems’ inwards rather than outwards. On the policy side, this invitation is framed as human fulfilment, people-centred interventions and cost-effective behaviour change (White, 2017, p. 121). By re-directing attention from external and social factors, like austere welfare provision, towards internal and individual factors, wellbeing as a political discourse, can be understood as a smokescreen of austerity (White, 2017, p. 121). At worst, wellbeing, when marketed as happiness, can become “a tool through which to shape and govern individual desire and conduct such that having poor wellbeing is seen as a failure of responsible citizenship” (Atkinson et al., 2019, p.13). Wellbeing, in this vein, then becomes a tool for manipulation whose sole purpose it is to produce better tax payers and obliging employees; that can then continue to perpetuate the

very system that led to people's poor wellbeing in the first place (Ahmed, 2010; Cederström & Spicer, 2015; Ehrenreich, 2009, 2010; White, 2017). However, we may also question, whether, ethically speaking, we should measure interventions by their intentions or their outcome; if wellbeing is an outcome, maybe that in itself is enough for a tool to be successful (Haydoon, Hey & Brunetti, 2020).

2.4.3 Normatising wellbeing

Bishop (2015) also criticizes psychology's list making tendencies and critically asks how and with whom these lists are drawn up. He criticises positive psychology specifically for being "a research program built on the subjective views of some psychologists about the right way to live" (p.5); which is deeply connected with ethno-centric, often white, middle class and cis-gendered, perspectives of what wellbeing is (Henry, 2007; see also Chapter 3); thereby setting up a tightly defined normative frame work of what 'normal' wellbeing ought to look like (Alexandrova, 2015). That 'normal' often centres around activity-based approaches for connecting, getting out there, thriving, growing and flourishing. The New Economics Foundation, 5 ways to wellbeing (Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give), for example, are a widely adapted policy recommendation that all target individual action and behaviour (Aked et al. 2009). Such approaches not only fail to take into account the social and political level of wellbeing, they also leave no room for an individual's vulnerability and need for being idle, reserved and introverted, at least every once in a while (Dahlberg, Todres & Galvin, 2009).

Coming from a more phenomenological angle of critique, we therefore need to learn to understand "the 'bandwidth' of ways of being human, contesting the myth that there is some single standard of normality and ways of being in the world, of thought, emotions, beliefs and desires, of ways of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, of rhythms of speed and slowness" (Rose, 2019, p. 188). Anyone who falls outside that 'normal' way of being well, what Cederström and Spicer have called wellness ideology, is "demonized as lazy, feeble or weak willed. They are seen as obscene deviants, unlawfully and unabashedly enjoying what every sensible person should resist" (Cederström & Spicer, 2015, pp. 4). This leads to further victimisation and

marginalisation, and only perpetuates and widens wellbeing and health inequalities.

2.4.4 Methodological shortcoming

There are obvious methodological shortcomings as the majority of existing discourses around wellbeing that *do* take into account its social determinants, usually consider context or structure as a ‘monolithic constant’ (Duff in Reid & Smith, 2018) that can be summed up into a single letter as part of a nice acronymic structure like PERMA. These approaches “are premised on the centrality of an autonomous and independently acting or feeling individual” (Atkinson et al., 2017, p. 5). As Kahneman observes (2011) psychology has largely been operating from the assumptions of *homo economicus*, that is (wo-)men making informed, rational decisions to maximise one’s wellbeing. Although Smith & Reid (2018, p. 814) claim that assumptions in wellbeing research have shifted towards *homo felix*, “the monadic, self-interested pleasure-maximiser”. In this vein of research, individual subjective and objective factors of what good wellbeing may look like can be added, routinely abstracted into and appropriated by someone else’s neat, whole and absolute system (White, 2017). By simplifying the fluid, inter-dependent, place-specific and sometimes contradictory qualities of wellbeing into simple metrics, however, they violently reduce the complexity of idiosyncratic and culturally coloured experiences of vulnerable people that are *more than the sum of their parts*.

A ‘Conceptual Review of Community Wellbeing’ from the UK’s What Works Wellbeing Centre Community Wellbeing Evidence Programme (CWEP) (Atkinson et al., 2017) looked into assessments, frameworks and concepts that aimed to capture that *extra something* that emerges out of being and becoming well together. Acknowledging the above methodological shortcomings, their advice to future research is to pay more attention to “individual stories, narratives or case studies of particular institutions in the community or of interventions that provide more nuanced and detailed information on local processes and pathways to community wellbeing” (p. 6), that work across dimensions of people, place and power (see also Atkinson et al., 2019)

2.4.5 Multi-scalar dimensions

Atkinson and colleagues (2019) suggest that wellbeing operates across different scales including local communities, organisations, regions, cities, nations and across the globe; often these scales are arranged hierarchically, where larger scales influence and shape smaller scales. Scales, in that sense, are arranged from a macro, to meso, to micro level (Martikainen, Bartley & Lahelma, 2002). In such as scalar perception it looks as though every community was hermeneutically sealed off from the other, and treats humans as separate from their socio-organisational environments. Traditional approaches to scale struggle to appreciate how humans are often part of more than one community and act across more than one scale at a time in ways that cannot always be clearly traced and delineated. Concerned with different scales of analysis in the context of globalisation, Katz (2001) puts forward a topographical understanding of scale which may be adapted to wellbeing research. Topographical scales, according to Katz (2001) are “intersecting effects and material consequences, to reveal a local that is constitutively global [...] to develop a politics that works the grounds of and between multiply situated social actors in a range of geographical locations who are at once bound and rent by the diverse forces of globalization“ (p. 1214). In line with Atkinson and colleagues’ (2019) concerns about rising tensions of peri-urban developments in the Global South, wellbeing away from components also necessitates a need to think about intersecting and interlinking local and global scales differently. Katz’ topographical imagination (2001) might be a way forward in this regard but requires further investigation (although see Chapter 3 on ‘situated knowledge’). I will later argue that the home, too, is a space where different scales, the personal, local and global, become intertwined and mutually imbricated (Searle, Smith & Cook, 2009).

2.4.6 Temporal dimensions, facing sustainability

To date, temporal dimensions in wellbeing research are either looked at as an event or series of events, for example, research on wellbeing-enhancing practices like walking (Ettema & Smajic, 2015; Little, 2012) or yoga (Philo, Cadman & Lea, 2015); or they consider wellbeing through a life course approach, looking at the entire span of an individual existence (e.g. Ballas & Dorling, 2007). Although some mental

health research also looks at pre-natal factors, like the mother's mood and environmental factors, that determine a child's likelihood to develop affective disorders later in life (Glynn et al., 2018). However, this research, too is limited to a human life span.

Similar to multiple scales, Atkinson and colleagues (2019) then note that temporal questions pertaining to sustainability and inter-generational legacies are vacant from current wellbeing discourses (Naiman & Dudgeon, 2011). The wellbeing of the planet will have a direct impact on our physical wellbeing (controlling diseases, getting good nutrition and clean water), on our economic wellbeing (a majority of the world's population won't be able to afford, for instance, water anymore), and on our social and political wellbeing (addressing global overpopulation and dealing with waves of migrants from areas that have become uninhabitable because of flooding, for instance; re-allocating food and water resources ethically). In fact, a decline in ecological wellbeing is likely to have more unforeseeable ripple effects on all areas of our life and across different time scales (Abdallah et al., 2009; Dietz, Rosa & York, 2009).

One of the few frameworks that appreciates the time-sensitive and inter-generational nature of our climate emergency is the Happy City framework (Montgomery, 2013). However, a precarious political climate across the globe makes it hard to think sustainably about the future, partly because long-term strategies that commit to wellbeing, might be overturned by the next government (Atkinson et al., 2019). Instead of building up an inter-generational contract that might ensure the wellbeing of future generations, governments and consumers tend to focus on quick wins and artificial need creation, which, in the long run, creates more problems than it claims to solve³ (Pickering, 2007; Searle, 2008). As an example, the introduction of paper straws, created, in the matter of a year, a false sense of agency and feel-good-factor in a system that cannot solely be measured in

³ Although the Wales' Wellbeing of Future Generation Act 2015 is a welcomed exception. They are putting forward that "[p]ublic bodies really need to be focusing on how their decisions are going to impact in the long-term, and working together to prevent problems occurring, recognising that no single public body can respond to some of the big challenges that need to be addressed" (<https://futuregenerations.wales/>)

terms of years that it takes to degrade a plastic straw but is, in reality, much more complex (Spicer, 2019).

Addressing some of these concerns, post-humanist wellbeing researchers (Andrews, 2017, 2019; Andrews & Duff, 2019; McPhie, 2019) consider how wellbeing might look like *after ecocide*, that is in a time when most of what we know as human life will have been eradicated because of global warming. McPhie (2019) suggests adapting an ecological approach to understand how an environmental catastrophe is not something in the future that we can deter or perhaps avoid, the catastrophe is already happening, we are already living in the end times (Morton, 2016; Nancy, 2014). This, too, requires a different thinking about time and legacy of wellbeing research, but also puts into question what wellbeing without humans (or at least without poor, precariously living humans in low-income regions) might look like.

2.5 A relational approach towards wellbeing

A growing body of research, referred to as relational approach to wellbeing (Atkinson, 2013), has been addressing the above noted criticism of the components approach to wellbeing. Specifically, this body of research claims that the social, semantic, cultural, economic and political environments from which wellbeing comes into existence across time and place cannot be looked at as a separate, bounded entity. How we perceive our own and other's wellbeing is coloured by the embedded architectures of our everyday lives, our personal history, bodily dispositions and social expectations. But this kind of architecture is not just a backdrop that consider the 'person-in-context' as such phrasing assumes that that context is a separate, static, fixed and independent variable (Campbell & Cornish, 2014, p. 6).

A relational approach then argues that wellbeing emerges out of the relations and transactions within these human and non-human, multi-scalar and multi-temporal environments. Wellbeing itself becomes indistinguishable from its environment, and therefore becomes an environment of sorts itself (Atkinson, 2013; McPhie, 2019; Panelli & Tipa, 2009; White, 2010, 2017). Thus, and in accordance with more eudemonic strands of analysis, wellbeing is performatively emergent through a flow of action and interaction and a process rather than an outcome making it

constantly fluctuating as a set of circumstantial, social and material conditions (White, 2010).

In terms of community wellbeing, this marks a decisive conceptual change in direction. Whereas previous approaches usually look at the interaction of environment and self as a one-directional and linear process (individuals make connections, or green spaces lead to wellbeing), a more relational approach towards wellbeing acknowledges how these sorts of relationships are bi-directional (Sointu, 2012; White, 2017). More relational approaches between individuals and collectives, their formal and informal networks, issues of trust and reciprocity and questions around power and control (Prilleltensky, 2012) may also affect another entity's wellbeing in unforeseeable ways and in a systemic relationship, making them even multi-directional (Crisp, 2016).

Invoking Merleau-Ponty (1968, p. 155; see also Chapter 4) here, we can say that wellbeing is not like a second layer of relationships, like the butter on the bread; instead it is the totality of that what *is*. As such wellbeing is more than just the sum of its parts and happens very much in the interconnected, messy in-between spaces of interaction; wellbeing happens through opportunities and possibilities that emerge out of these spaces (Andrews, 2018; Atkinson, Fuller & Painter, 2012; White, 2017). This then warrants a deeper understanding of the type of networks that wellbeing is embedded in as an immanent plane for its multiple unfoldings. This next section looks at a variety of determinants that condition wellbeing in a relational way, leaning on, with broad brushstrokes, the What Works Wellbeing Centre approach to contextualising wellbeing in terms of the interplay of people, power and place (Atkinson et al., 2017; South et al., 2016).

2.5.1 People

The people level of wellbeing includes individual subjectivities, emotions and histories and the way that we relate to other people around us. This section looks at community and social capital as two aspects of people-powered wellbeing.

Community

White (2010) suggests that “the proper ‘home’ of wellbeing may be more properly identified at the community level than at the individual level” (p. 168). In other words, there can be no individual wellbeing without the community through which they relate themselves to. Reducing isolation and developing a sense of belonging and feeling understood can improve a person’s overall wellbeing profoundly (Kahneman, Diener & Schwarz, 1999). Studies further suggest that extroverts typically have higher levels of wellbeing as they can better “react and approach rewarding stimuli” (Diener & Lucas, 1999, p. 67) in a social setting. However, this understanding is heavily influenced by a Western ideal that favours extroversion over introversion and neglects the social role a family or a close group of intimate friends could play (Christopher, 1999). This brings into focus the importance of individual perception (finding out *what really matters* to a person and their community). Searle (2008) remarks that “actual levels of affluence and *feelings* of affluence run in opposite directions” (2008, p. 2); in other words, once we have reached a minimum economic standard, the more we have, the less we feel we have⁴. This self-identifying, perceptive element is also core in the following definition of community wellbeing (e.g. Atkinson et al., 2017; South et al., 2016):

“Community wellbeing is the combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfil their potential.”
(Wiseman and Brasher, 2008, 358).

In terms of mobilising community wellbeing, there is a raising awareness of the plurality and multitude of communities that a single person might be part of at any one time, warranting deeper engagement with how the different conditions synergise, contradict and interact on different scales and mobile sites of wellbeing (Atkinson et al., 2019; Gorman-Murray & Bissell, 2018).

⁴ This observation is set into context in what is called the Easterlin paradox which observes that although material prosperity has improved quality of life in the Western world, overall happiness and wellbeing levels have remained largely unchanged (Easterlin, 1974; Layard, 2011).

Social capital

Community wellbeing has also been considered in connection with debates around social capital, where organisational networks, such as neighbourhood forums, a reading group or in Putnam's famous example a bowling club, can build bridges of trust and togetherness which makes people feel good about themselves and the world they live in (Putnam, 1995; Sixsmith & Boneham, 2007). Strong social networks that enable civic participation are central to wellbeing in this approach (South et al., 2016). In the words of Robert Putnam (1993), this type of behaviour is typical for a 'civic community'. Community organisers in these communities will tend to be white, middle-class people with reasonable levels of education and socio-economic status (Lowndes et al., 2006; Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley, 2004). It is in these types of civic communities where we usually witness different forms of social organising that, collectively, create virtuous circles leading to "high levels of cooperation, trust, reciprocity, civic engagement, and collective well-being." (Putnam, 1993, p. 177).

On the other hand, in communities of low socio-economic status and high levels of precarity Putnam has identified that "defection, distrust, shirking, exploitation, isolation, dis-order, and stagnation intensify [sic] one another in a suffocating miasma of vicious circles" (1993, p. 177), in what he termed the uncivic community. Putnam further observes that *modus operandi* for such communities is: 'never cooperate'. Once trapped in this mind-set, "no matter how exploitative and backward, it is irrational for any individual to seek a more collaborative alternative", excluding perhaps with their close friends and family members (1993, p. 177).

One way of addressing this is through meaningful community engagement, co-creation and joint decision making which has proven, although as of yet under-researched, benefits on wellbeing (Corcoran, Walsh & Marshall, 2017; Pennington et al., 2018).

2.5.2 Place

A host of literature in human geography has engaged with wellbeing as a *spatial phenomenon*; that is something that happens and is experienced in a place (place is

a space imbued with meaning (Cresswell, 2013)) (Bagnall et al., 2018; Cattell et al., 2008). As Fleuret and Prugneau (2015, p. 111) note: “space is an active agent in shaping wellbeing”. The following will look at this in more detail, in terms of therapeutic landscapes, home, city, and home-city geographies.

Therapeutic landscapes and green spaces

Green and blue spaces (like parks, gardens, forests, rivers and lakes) and other ‘healthy spaces’ (like community centres) are often linked with a literature on ‘therapeutic landscapes’ (Conradson, 2005; Gesler, 1992, 1993), which is the idea that if a contingent set of different social, physical, emotional and symbolic elements come together in a specific place, then healing takes place (Dinnie, Brown & Morris, 2013; Van den Bergh et al; 2010). However, Corcoran (forthcoming) cautions that ‘greenwashing’, especially of urban spaces, is problematic because it does not appreciate the overall quality of places, for example the whole journeys people travel between parks, work and their home. The ‘green is good’ mentality further warrants a more differentiated view of the kind of people green spaces and other therapeutic landscapes ought to benefit. Corcoran (2020) posits that people with severe mental health problems, for example people with agoraphobia, anxiety, fears of persecution and deeply black moods are likely not to benefit from the therapeutic effects of these type of interventions. In line with a review on community wellbeing (Atkinson et al., 2017), Corcoran (2020) puts forward co-design approaches to place making that differentiate between people’s individual needs and preferences.

Home as site for wellbeing

In light of the a global urban housing affordability crisis (Wetzstein, 2017) and recent disasters like the Grenfell Tower fires (Power & Mee, 2019) it becomes increasingly clear “how a breakdown of care in the spaces of governance and the ethics of markets can translate and flow through the materialities of housing” (Power & Mee, 2019, p. 18). In turn these sorts of developments become “incompatible with life” (ibid.) and have a detrimental effect on the nation’s collective psyche as well as on individuals’ wellbeing. This is why social scientists are increasingly turning their attention to the home as a site for being and

becoming well, and the possibility for ‘feeling at home’ under ‘unhomely’ or austere conditions, like Brexit (Blunt, 2005; Blunt & Sheringham, 2019; Chambers et al., 2016; Easthope, 2013; Long, 2013; McFarlane, 2011; Power & Bergan, 2018; Searle, Smith & Cook, 2009).

City as site for wellbeing

Alongside a discussion on housing, there is also rising interest in what cities can offer for attaining and maintaining the ‘good’ life. Attention has turned, to: what makes ‘just’ cities (Barnett, 2011; Harvey, 2003), ‘good’ cities (Amin, 2006), ‘psychologically resilient’ cities (Landry & Murray, 2017), ‘neurosocial’ cities (Fitzgerald & Rose, 2016), ‘collectively owned’ cities (Sassen, 2015), ‘care-full’ cities (Williams, 2020) and ‘happy’ cities (Ballas, 2013; Montgomery, 2013). Cities, and the way they are organised and designed, are, in the words of Landry and Murray (2017): “primarily an emotional experience with psychological effects” (p. 5). Landry and Murray (2017) further argue that living in the city is a two-way psychological process, where the city shapes our dispositions and our dispositions shape the city. Scholars might look into what kind of architecture provides environments that enhance or enable human flourishing (Corcoran & Marshall, 2015) and what the role of neighbourhoods is (Atkinson, Fuller & Painter, 2012). In addition, the urban commons movement (Borch & Kornberger, 2016; Foster & Iaione, 2018) proposes that co-managing democratic access to vital infrastructures in the city, like community gardens, further education, transport, health and social services, can create place stewardship and foster socio-economic regeneration and community wellbeing in urban neighbourhoods (Thompson, 2015).

Home-city geographies and wellbeing

For the sake of this thesis, I am most interested in literature pertaining to home and city, as a complex and holistic socio-political site for individual and collective wellbeing. Whereas these can be seen as two separate sets of literature, I am reading them together within the emergent strand of research of ‘home-city geographies’ (Blunt & Sheringham, 2019; Power & Williams, 2020). Home-city geographies seek to bring into conversation urban domesticities (home-making in the city) and domestic urbanism (the city as home): “we argue that home-city geographies

encompass the material and imaginative geographies of both within an inclusive conceptual framework” (Blunt & Sheringham, 2019; p.815). In later parts of this thesis, I will bring both the inside and outside spaces of home/city together through a holistic dwelling lens (Galvin & Todres, 2015).

Davidson (2000) provides an example of home-city geographies that pertains to wellbeing. Her study on agoraphobic women conceptualises the home as an anchor of security and predictability, a place where agoraphobic women are ‘healthy’, whereas the mall is what Davidson calls a pathoscape, an environment ruled and alienated through the forces of capitalism that induces panic and anxiety. Other geographers of wellbeing have been referring to Giddens' ontological security, a concept that refers to a feeling of stability, continuity and predictability of oneself and one's environment. It can be described as a confidence of ‘knowing who I am and where I stand’ without needing to fear any immediate change towards one's structural parameters (e.g. in Andrews et al., 2014; Bondi, 2014).

2.5.3 Power

Power has to do with the way in which influence and opportunities are distributed in society. This section looks into the connection between wellbeing and inequality, austerity and policies.

Wellbeing and inequality

“A house may be large or small; as long as the neighbouring [sic] houses are likewise small, it satisfies all social requirements for a residence. But let there arise next to the little house a palace, and the little house shrinks to a hut. The little house now makes it clear that its inmate has no social position at all to maintain [...] the occupant of the relatively little house will always find himself more uncomfortable, more dissatisfied, more cramped within his four walls” (Marx [1847] cited in Ballas, Dorling & Shaw, 2007, p. 163).

The above quote suggests strongly that the lived experience of socio-economic inequality has a strong bearing on one's feeling of comfort and satisfaction; in other words, the larger the juxtaposition between rich and poor, the lower one's wellbeing. Marx's insights have been further developed by a number of different

studies. For instance, the so-called Whitehall Studies found that the more control or agency people have over their psychosocial environment, the better their health (Marmot et al., 1991). Marmot (2004, 2015) also found a correlation between social status and wellbeing: people situated on the lower rungs of the social ladder typically experience less wellbeing compared to those of a higher social status. This suggests that wellbeing is strongly embedded and conditioned by one's socio-political environment.

This point is also supported by Wilkinson's and Pickett's influential studies discussed in *The Spirit Level* (2010) that claim that in countries and regions where the socio-economic gap is greatest, for example because of income disparity, we find considerably higher numbers of people with physical and mental health difficulties, drug abuse, poor access to education, imprisonment, obesity, low social mobility, absence of trust and community life, violence, teenage pregnancies, and low child- wellbeing. Ballas, Doring and Shaw (2007) argue that this is because people naturally compare themselves to their peer groups; if someone else has a thing that we don't have then there is a sense of perceived inequality that can foster a sense of dissatisfaction and low wellbeing much like Marx describes in the above quote. In line with Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) and Ballas et al. (2007), Pickering (2007) concludes by arguing that we need to acknowledge that low wellbeing thrives in the vast valleys of perceived socio-economic inequality.

Wellbeing and austerity

Barr, Kinderman and Whitehead (2015) have found that there is an increase in adults reporting mental health problems between 2009 and 2013 in the UK. The increase was greatest amongst people with a low level of education who were also more likely to be out of work. The authors link this trend to austerity measures implemented since 2010. On a European level, Karanikolos and colleagues (2013) have found that the global financial crisis caused fiscal austerity, economic shocks and a weakening health and welfare provision across most European countries. They further argue that these developments are deeply ingrained in a neoliberal agenda that seems to have escalated a health and social crises across Europe. Neoliberalism can be understood as "the celebration of markets, competition, individualism, personal responsibility and self-improvement through individual

entrepreneurship in the world of work” (Rose, 2019, pp. 20). Rose (2019, p. 41-60) further argues that the hyper-individualising tendencies of a neoliberal mindset tears humans, who are inherently social animals, apart into survival-oriented, self-helping tax-payers who often end up lonely and isolated. Following up on these trends, Ruckert and Labonte (2017) argue for a shift of national and global taxation policies and better social protection policies that need to be integrated globally and aligned with sustainable development goals. Hence as a holistic and integrated project that cannot be looked at as a separate health concern, but as a global policy concern.

Picking up from these developments, feminist health scholars (Ahmed, 2014; Hall, 2018) hold neoliberalism and capitalism responsible for the “drastically unequal distribution of bodily vulnerabilities” (Ahmed, 2014). Austerity, rather than being an abstract economic or political affair, is in fact deeply intimate and affects people in their everyday, personal and gendered lives (Hall, 2018). Hall argues that policy and care research needs to shift towards these more personal dimensions of austerity policies, for instance through telling everyday, personal stories that are reflective of wider structural inequalities, as otherwise austerity policies may become “accepted, normalised and depoliticized” (p. 2).

Wellbeing policies

It is as yet unclear what the relation between austerity policies and wellbeing policies is, how (in-)compatible these two are, or whether austerity is really over, as Theresa May proclaimed as prime minister in 2018 (Stewart, 2018). One way or another, wellbeing is at the top of the policy agenda in a range of countries such as England, Wales, Finland, New Zealand, Australia and France, partly because they are realising that investing in wellbeing locally will bring immense savings to the public purse, for example through social return on investment (Miller & Hall, 2013). There is also a rising awareness that how well a country is doing cannot be measured in GDP alone; if you take money from the poorest and give it to the richest, GDP does not change, wellbeing, however, gets worse (Atkinson et al., 2019; Hardoon, Hey & Brunetti, 2020). A better way to measure progress in wellbeing could be possible with tools like Genuine Progress Indicator, Gross National Happiness or Happy Planet Index (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2013, p. 4).

These realisations also influence policy makers, who are becoming increasingly aware that wellbeing and human thriving are not just an outcome, but should be at the heart of any policy concern. In a UK context (which this thesis is based on) “[a]n evidence-informed movement, spanning at least 50 years, has swept wellbeing into the policy landscape as a relevant, credible, and measurable way to connect policy goals with policy outcomes in a way that matters to people’s lives.” (Hardoon, Hey & Brunetti, 2020, p. 5). The UK, for instance, now has a minister for loneliness and suicide prevention. A wellbeing lens in policy may help to appreciate the many inter-related factors and effects of community interventions which means that “we can better see how to deal with policies where the costs are spent by one department, but the benefits or savings are received by different departments”(Hardoon, Hey & Brunetti, 2020, p. 4). Yet, here, too we note an undertone of deficit and cost that might fall into the tick-box-trick of wellbeing (Reid & Smith, 2018).

One key policy area with under-researched effects on people’s wellbeing is housing (Chambers et al., 2018). A systematic review of housing policies and wellbeing evidence (ibid.) found that Housing First, a world-wide implemented intervention scheme that provides immediate, unconditional access to housing for vulnerable people with complex needs, came out first in terms of delivering wellbeing outcomes for its tenants. Those outcomes include physical health, housing stability, personal wellbeing, mental health, integration and satisfaction with the local community and surroundings. However, the review also stressed that more research needs to be done to evaluate how to make sure that individual tenants get the support that suits their individual needs best, and what other measures may help reduce isolation and loneliness and increase overall wellbeing in the long-term.

2.6 Theoretical underpinnings

Andrews and Duff (2019; Andrews, 2019) review social theory that seeks to better conceptualise these relational approaches in health and wellbeing research in the social sciences. Specifically, they note a growing trend to underpin health research

by social theory and philosophy, for instance corporeality, materiality, assemblage, relationality, vitality and affect.

In these strands, “wellbeing is not a beach you go and lie on. It’s a sort of dynamic dance and there’s movement in that all the time and actually it’s the functionality of that movement which is actually the true levels of wellbeing” (Marcs cited in Dodge et al., 2012, p. 230). That true level of wellbeing can also be conceptualised as a relational ontology (the study of being) (Reid & Smith, 2018; Slife, 2004). A relational ontology says that that what makes the world, is not just an agglomeration of separate actors in their environment that each have separate intentions and agency. Instead, a relational approach stresses that the world is co-created through shared and distributed agency between different human and non-human actors. The actual ‘being’ is neither a tangible entity on earth nor a higher, transcendental law-giving power (laws, God, reason, nature) but an imminent, transient process that shows how these types of relations are configured and moved across space and time (Reid & Smith, 2018; Slife, 2004). These processes may become ritualised, everyday practices that generate recognisability and relative stability; however, these processes are in no way pre-determined and may change over time or abruptly. In other words, they have a performative potential to enact other worlds (Butler, 2015).

The plane on which these processes happen can be described as an assemblage. Assemblage is a concept by French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Buchanan (1997), closely reading Deleuze and Guattari, remarks that an assemblage understanding of health ought to move away from aetiology (cause and effect) and towards ethology (action and affect) (p. 74). This is another way of saying, that what conditions and determines wellbeing are not linearly defined correlations between independent variables; instead health is affected through action and reaction that happen in asymmetrical and uneven ways. Therefore, body and health are not given variables or outcomes, rather they are a philosophical construct energised by flows *between* different bodies and forces.

In terms of wellbeing, we can best understand wellbeing as an emergence that manifests itself in these in-between spaces of the multiple, fluid relationships

between different elements in these assemblages (White, 2010, 2017). The implications of what *happens* in these in-between spaces is four-fold:

First, practices unfold as processes. Tiberius (2006), for instance, argues that contemporary wellbeing philosophers are not very interested in hedonism and refers to Nozick's experience machine, which promises to artificially create pleasurable experiences. Nozick noted that people usually prefer the 'real' experience over an artificial one because we actually value *doing* things over just experiencing them. This has been linked to non-representational theory (Andrews, 2019) the idea that not everything that matters is tangible or indeed representative of a single, bounded entity. Non-representational theory then focusses on speeds, rhythms and movement to conceptualise those ephemeral but meaningful atmospheres and moods that usually escape our explicit analysis.

A second implication of that which happens in these in-between spaces, is that energy and vitality is created. Earlier, I argued that wellbeing is more than the sum of its parts; and the question is what the 'more' actually is and where it comes from. In his book 'Being Ecological' Morton (2018) flips this saying on his head and argues that the more-ness is not in the sum but is within the parts of that sum. Every little particle and molecule in the total sum of what wellbeing might be, holds within itself a universe of infinite capability and possibility. The possible 'more-ness' that emerges out of a coming together of different bodies within an assembly, cannot possibly be explained in terms of addition but rather by ways of multiplication and differentiation, as a forward motion, rather than an end point (Butler, 2015).

Following Todres and Galvin (2010) wellbeing may then be understood as "the existential possibilities of moving forward with time, space, others, mood and our bodies" (p. 3); as the ability and flexibility to move and be moved with different bodies and moved in a way that it generates movement, possibility and change. Moving, however, may also mean a moving backwards in the form of mental time travel, revisiting and re-contextualising memories, stories and moods in meaningful ways. There is a sense of richness and excitement that can result from these movements that, potentially, can have political potential, as a force to become oriented towards less proximate bodies and possibilities (see Chapter 3 on 'queer'

orientation). In a Deleuzian vein, wellbeing as energy lies in the quality and diversity of these relations towards other bodies; the more different they are from each other (what Deleuze calls intensity), the more vitality and wellbeing happens.

A third implication, problematizes some of these free-flowing movements in terms of the possibility of agency and change. In many ways, a radically relational approach would suggest that new energy and movement (what Deleuze calls lines of flight) can be generated at any given moment given enough momentum and force building up within an assemblage. However, feminists like Fraser (1990) have criticised this conception and pointed out that assemblages are not neutral plane fields but that they are sticky with power and well-trodden ways of doing things. The way that power is distributed (see Chapter 3) cannot be ignored when trying to gather momentum to emancipate within new vitalities (Andrews & Duff, 2018; Greenhough, 2016).

The final implication of honing in on the in-between spaces of wellbeing assemblies is that it puts into question certain dichotomies pertaining to the bio-medical and molecularised understanding of health and wellbeing, such as ill/healthy, objective/subjective, nature/culture, body/mind, inside/outside. Through the processual mingling of practice between different bodies that are in constant process of coming together and reorienting, there are no independent, sealed-off markers that are clearly delineated from another independent, sealed-off markers that happens to be its opposite. Instead, in a relational understanding of wellbeing we can look at dichotomies as mutually constitutional of each other, as a spectrum, where elements of one are encapsulated in the other, rather than a scale. Wellbeing understood in a non-dichotic, spectral sense, then, can allow people to be *well within an illness*; for instance, hearing voices does not need to mean that someone is 'ill' (Rose, 2019). Throughout this thesis, I shall refer to these above processes of situating, orienting and unravelling as dwelling (Dahlberg, Todres & Galvin, 2009; Todres & Galvin, 2009).

2.6.1 Why dwelling?

The reader will notice from the title of this thesis and the titles of two of the articles, that I use and develop 'dwelling' as a central concept for this dissertation. I use

dwelling here as a way of applying an assemblage-like, relational understanding of wellbeing specifically to the processes of feeling and being at home (with oneself). I have chosen 'home' as an analytical focus point throughout two chapters, because it brings together an array of different temporal and spatial scales in an imaginative way, thereby addressing two short-comings I have identified in section 2.4. The home itself is an assemblage on which the personal experiences are interfaced with wider socio-economic inequalities, in relation to social care and housing welfare (Blunt & Sheringham, 2019; Chambers et al., 2019; Power & Mee, 2019). That interface is laden with power, meaning and possibility and points towards points of tension, friction and re-shifting of what it means to be homely in an unhomely world. Further, there is a growing body of research that suggests that housing and home are intrinsically linked to good mental health and wellbeing (Chambers et al., 2019)

However, dwelling also relates to a wealth of philosophy and social theory that is broadly concerned with studying experiences (Heidegger, 1992 [1951]). Galvin and Todres (2011; 2013) introduce the idea that wellbeing is an "intertwined experiential phenomenon" (2011, p.1) that comes in many forms and can only be recognised through sensing our own bodies. In reference to Heidegger's work on thinking, building and dwelling (1993, [1951]) Galvin and Todres (2010; 2013; Dahlberg, Todres, and Galvin, 2009) have developed the term dwelling-mobility. In line with feminist critique of Heidegger's work (Irigaray, 1999; Long, 2013; Young, 1997)(although not making it explicit in their writing) the authors point out that we must understand wellbeing in terms of letting-be-ness, return to a safe homestead, return to self, (dwelling) but also need to *make space* (what Irigaray (1999) refers to as 'air' in her book 'The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger', room to breathe, uproot, and unfold freely and floatingly) for new opportunities, possibilities and adventures (mobility). According to Todres and Galvin (2010) mobility "lies in all the ways in which we are called into the existential possibilities of moving forward with time, space, others, mood and our bodies. We could say that it is a kind of Eros or energy that can give a feeling of flow, a sense of aliveness and vibrant movement" (Todres & Galvin, 2010, p. 3). Their theories show clear resemblance with vitalist approaches in wellbeing, discussed in an earlier section.

However, dwelling-mobility appears to be more suitable as a theoretical framing for wellbeing in this thesis, because, unlike other conceptualizations, it takes into account the more passive, idiosyncratic, intimate, experiential practices of being and becoming well *as well as* the more active, outgoing and outward facing practices of being and becoming well.

By putting these two in a dialectical relationship, we open up many possibilities of how seeming opposites (inside/outside; subject/object; ill/healthy; alone/together; nature/culture) can come together in ways that are unique to how an individual feels in time and space and in exchange with other moods and bodies, such an understanding can help to *differentiate* between different ways towards wellbeing, for instance “one can think of a well-being possibility where mobility is emphasized, a well-being possibility where dwelling is emphasized and a well-being possibility where they are integrated” (Todres & Galvin, 2011, p.2). Such approaches to differentiation and more nuanced understanding of people’s individual circumstances, have also been identified as a research gap by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing (Atkinson et al., 2017).

2.7 Summary of my approach: Departure point

Intertwining the different theoretical approaches with the various perspectives and angles on people, place and power, a number of key points emerge, that are framing each of the three following chapters. As a research topic wellbeing is complex, multi-disciplinary and far from homogeneous. This chapter taken a step back and looked at the scientific underpinning and history of wellbeing research, which is increasingly moving away from a bio-medical conception of wellbeing as a deficit of health, or health as the opposite of illness (Kearns & Moon, 2002) towards more holistic understanding of health and wellbeing. The history of wellbeing research is strongly influenced by a distinction between hedonism (more short-term pleasure seeking, often in relation with subjective experiences happiness and satisfaction) and eudemonia (the idea of a ‘good’ life which includes subjective and objective factors, like social context) (Keyes, 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2001).

From there developed a host of theory and approaches in psychology and related disciplines. I have briefly introduced eight different strands that, to varying degrees,

evaluate and conceptualise different factors that contribute to human flourishing. Different types of wellbeing emerge from this body of literature including subjective wellbeing, (Diener & Lucas, 1999; Kahneman, 2008) and psychological wellbeing (Ryff & Keyes, 1995); although others argue that wellbeing will always revert to a biologically determined set-point that life events and external circumstances can only temporarily change (Diener & Lucas, 1999). Social and economic context and community plays an important role in some of these approaches, for example Antonovsky's salutogenesis (1987) and studies in economic wellbeing (Layard, 2011; Searle, 2008). I have also introduced studies in positive psychology, that focus on positive strengths, talents and virtues to the fullest (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2011).

This body of literature has dominated the wellbeing research landscape for a couple of decades but has, in recent years, been scrutinised for being an exercise in ticking boxes that is essentially simplifying and abstracting the complexities of human life into sealed-off, individual components (Atkinson, 2013) or molecules (Rose, 2019) that can be learned and taught (Reid & Smith, 2018). A person's historical trajectories, moods, socio-cultural background, environment, and socio-economic circumstances are merely seen as 'context', as a monolithic, stable variable, that is separate from the individual, who remains the centre of analysis. Research in psychology, what I have referred to as component approach (Atkinson, 2013), therefore has a specific way of producing knowledge about wellbeing that operates under a number of specific assumptions, with certain premises and desired outcomes in mind. I have argued that this approach is problematic in terms of truly understanding the embeddedness and interplay between different types of bodies and their environments, including those that are precarious, vulnerable, different or marginalised. *These are essentially questions about epistemology and ontology: how we come to know about something, what that something actually is, and how that what is, is also the basis for our actions and beliefs.*

2.7.1 Research Question 1

My first research question departs from this point and asks: *How can feminist epistemologies and 'queer tools' help us understand whose bodies produce what kind*

of wellbeing knowledge and how? I understand feminist epistemologies as one concerned with embodiment, affect and marginal voices and feminist knowledge production as a practice of coming together to care, that is care for one self and care for one another (Code, 2015; Martin, Myers & Viseu, 2015; Mountz et al., 2015). I understand ‘queer’ tools as a mode of orientation towards bodies that are less obvious, less expected and less proximate (Ahmed, 2006). A queer approach brings the personal dimension of subjectively reflecting on our own dispositions, histories and moods and bringing them into conversation with a more political dimension, pertaining the deeper causes of poor mental health and wellbeing in our communities and also the academic landscapes in which these are researched (Mountz et al., 2015).

There is, of course, already a burgeoning awakening that the component approach to wellbeing is insufficient as a way to understanding the deep inter-relatedness between subjectivities, materiality and social forces in their environment (White, 2010). I have identified and discussed six short-comings of the component approach that stress how molecularising health into separate components that can just be added up and replaced does not do justice how human wellbeing is more than the sum of its parts (Rose, 2019) and further introduces certain societal expectations to ‘be happy’ that do not do justice to the underlying causes of poor mental health which are often structurally ingrained in capitalist growth fantasies (Cederström & Spicer, 2015).

Some of these concerns are being picked up through a relational understanding of wellbeing that sees wellbeing as a process, rather than an outcome, as something that emerges out of the in-between spaces between different bodies as an environment (Atkinson, 2013; White, 2010, 2017). However, I further argued that wellbeing research to date has a hard time accommodating for different spatial and temporal scales; as humans we are often imbricated in multiple, overlapping scales at the same time which poses a number of questions to appropriate methods in wellbeing research (Andrews, 2019a, 2019b; Atkinson et al., 2019). Similar questions were picked up by a conceptual review on community wellbeing (Atkinson et al., 2017) that noted how “individual stories, narratives or case studies of particular institutions in the community or of interventions that provide more nuanced and

detailed information on local processes and pathways to community wellbeing” (p. 6) were lacking from the current literature. Similarly, Andrews (2019a) suggests, for example, an engagement with sensory and progressive ethnographies that take seriously the researcher’s own immersed experiences of coming to know about health processually and through their own embodiment and situatedness within society. Andrews (2019a) further suggests that arts-based methods paying attention to movement, time and embodiment may also shape a growing understanding of relational wellbeing.

2.7.2 Research Question 2

This then marks the entrance point for my second research question which asks: *How can a dwelling lens, both as a methodology and theory, help us better understand the complexly layered lived experiences of mental health service users and do justice to the entangled, complex ways of being and becoming well?* To help answer this question, I have developed an arts-based method I refer to as ‘Story Houses’ that aims to capture the idiosyncratic experiences of mental health service users (Zielke, 2019). I also reflect on my own embodied experiences of doing sensitive research. This research question is aimed to bring into conversation some of the conceptual debates around wellbeing with the everyday, lived realities of people’s wellbeing journeys, answering to Andrew’s (2019) call towards more arts-based methods to better understand relational wellbeing,

Questions pertaining to conceptualising and relationally bringing together scales and dimensions of wellbeing also became evident when looking at wellbeing in terms of people, place and power. I introduced different inter-related, social, socio-economic and spatial factors that shape and are shaped by wellbeing possibilities. It became evident that feelings of belonging and togetherness are harder to achieve in ‘uncivic communities’ (Putnam, 1993), which are prevalent in low-income, precarious neighbourhoods, especially those that have been hit by neoliberal austerity policies (Rose, 2019). There is a clear and well-researched link between different kind of inequalities and wellbeing (e.g. Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010) that has a direct effect on how people feel. In the words of feminist Sara Ahmed (2010; 2015),

structural inequalities leave bruises on our bodies, they hit us in very personal and intimate ways.

This tenor is also echoed in the emerging literature of home-city geographies (Blunt & Sheringham, 2019; p.815) as a holistic, integrative framework that brings together the domestic inwards-facing practices of dwelling with the wider structural, political issues pertaining to city living and housing policies in austere times (Power & Mee, 2019). Again, the home is a locus of care where one's personal dispositions are interfaced and mingled with questions of power and the possibility for political alternatives. Here, too, scholars note a gap in the current understanding of bringing the personal in connection with the political dimensions of housing (Hall, 2018), a literature that is catalysed with a feminist conception of dwelling (hooks, 2015) and the notion that the personal is intimately connected to the political, where struggling dwellers are messed over and not messed up (Hanisch, 1969). This conception picks up from an understanding that the responsibility of being and becoming well does not solely lie in the neoliberalised individual, the *homo felix*, but should be a collective endeavour that holds public processes and governance accountable (Ahmed, 2015; Rose, 2019; Smith & Reid, 2018).

2.7.3 Research Question 3

The third and final research question joins in with these discussions and asks: *How does the personal dimension of dwelling relate to the political discourses of housing activism, and specifically the community land trust movement?* Community land trusts (CLTs) are non-profit, community-based organisations offering affordable housing solutions and other neighbourhood-based initiatives, like community gardens, cafes and community facilities to their members (Engelsman, Rowe & Southern, 2016; Thompson, 2015). I use CLTs here as a concrete empirical example that uses the home as site for political action and am concerned here in understanding how urban policies and collective action may be meaningfully linked to the everyday realities of urban dwellers, specifically those with mental health needs (Chambers et al., 2018).

Together, the three research questions create an epistemological, methodological, empirical and theoretical framework to more fully understand the many inter-

related entanglements of being and becoming well in precarious times and point towards possibilities of care, collective action and hopeful changes in the lives of individuals and the communities that matter to them.

CHAPTER 3

The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle
the Master's House: Six 'Queer' Tools for
Wellbeing Research

Abstract: *‘How can feminist epistemologies and ‘queer tools’ help us understand who or which bodies produce what kind of wellbeing knowledge and how?’ is the question at the heart of this chapter. By answering these questions this chapter conceives a feminist epistemological framework in the shape of six queer tools for wellbeing research. I understand ‘queer’ as an orientation towards less proximate bodies. These less proximate bodies often have subjectivities and dispositions different from those bodies that typically produce knowledge on what wellbeing ‘is’ or ought to be. The political implications are that the ones in power perpetuate rather than challenge the kind of structures that have led to low wellbeing in the first place. The master’s tool will never dismantle the master’s tools; and so feminists call for a new set of tools that questions and care about the kind of knowledge we produce in academia and beyond.*

Keywords: epistemology, interdisciplinarity, queer theory, wellbeing

3.1 Introduction: Opening the toolbox

“... survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women [or any other marginalised group] who still define the master’s house as their only source of support.” (Lorde, 1984)

Audre Lorde’s words are a timely reminder for the necessity of a different set of tools for thinking about and researching wellbeing. But it is also easy to misread her words: what she did *not* mean is that the master’s tools, that is the practices of powerful institutions like the government, businesses, media, health and social care sector are bad per se. Quite the opposite, many of these large institutions have actively adopted and embraced the tools that have emerged bottom-up in local communities. In a policy context, for instance, the rise of Big Society, localism and neighbourhood renewals have actively fostered community-based wellbeing interventions (Corcoran, forthcoming) such as social prescribing, where doctors prescribe activities like volunteering, arts classes or community gardening, instead of or adjunct to antidepressant or individual therapy (Stickley & Hui, 2012). Social prescribing does not only boost local economies and provide huge cost savings to the health and social care sector, it also has a sustainable, positive effect on the mental and social wellbeing of patients (Bickerdike et al., 2017; Swift, 2017).

So where is the problem with using the ‘master’s tools’ then when they are bringing about positive change and are basically the same as those of local communities anyway? The problems, according to Lorde and other feminist thinkers concerned with human flourishing (Ahmed, 2004, 2010, 2013; Ehrenreich, 2010), is that these tools perpetuate rather than challenge the way that resources and power are distributed in society. This is problematic, to say the least, because the root causes for poor mental wellbeing are often inextricably entrenched in socio-economic,

spatial and political inequalities (Abdallah, Wheatley & Quick, 2014; Marmot et al., 2017; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). So to say that the onus of ‘being well’ lies with the individual (the patient, citizen or consumer) is merely an exercise of passing the buck onto the individual who ought to ‘just be happy’ or ‘pull themselves together’ (Ahmed, 2010; Cederström & Spicer, 2015; Ehrenreich, 2010). This shifting of responsibility then distracts from persisting and deep-rooted structural inequalities, which are the foundation of the master’s house. If we continue to use the master’s tools, even though they look like our own, only the “most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable” (Lorde, 1984), precisely because the powerful are invested in keeping intact their house as a sole locus of power. It is with this context in mind, that feminist and queer authors are calling for genuine change and ask: *How can feminist epistemologies and ‘queer tools’ help us understand who or which bodies produce what kind of wellbeing knowledge and how?* They do so by offering insights from the margins that challenge contemporary (policy) discourses around wellbeing that, in buzzwordy fashion, are often just looking at symptoms rather than causes, thereby continuing to ignore the plight of the less fortunate. Before moving onto the six different tools, this chapter opens with an extended introduction, as a feminist instruction on why we need these tools and how we can utilise them in wellbeing research.

3.1.1 ‘Call the operator’: The personal is political

One of the key tenets of feminist theory is its emphasis on affect and experience and an insistence on how one’s personal emotions, like feeling depressed, are actually a reflection of a wider socio-political ‘sickness’ brought about by an unequal distribution of power and resources (Cvetkovich, 2012; Hanisch, 1969; Segal, 2017). Therefore, we need to weigh up the power of affect and the way it inevitably moves us in our thinking and political actions, both as humans as well as researchers (Hemmings, 2012; Pedwell & Whitehead, 2012; Tomlinson, 2010). Sara Ahmed, for instance, sees rage and anger as her prime motivator for living a feminist life and contributing to feminist scholarship (Ahmed, 2017). For her, like many other feminists (e.g. Lorde, 1984; Young, 1997), the deeply felt, everyday injustices and mistreatment she has experienced as a queer woman from mixed

ethnic origins, have fuelled and ignited her passion to expose and challenge these injustices. Rather than turning inwards on feelings of sadness, rejection and frustration, feminists tend to turn outwards and hold their environment accountable for the structural disenfranchisement they and other disenfranchised groups are experiencing.

This experience is more than just a feeling of upset, it comes in the very tangible and embodied form of higher suicide rates, poor housing, higher number of teen pregnancies, higher obesity rates, higher unemployment rates, fewer social connections, and fewer social support infrastructures, just to name a few (Abdallah, Wheatley & Quick, 2014; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Therefore, the way we feel and function in our day to day lives is not just a private affair but is indicative of oppressing hegemonic orders and (lack of) infrastructural support systems that value some ways of living as more ‘desirable’ than others (Butler, 2015; Segal, 2017). For Hanisch (1969), a second wave feminist, it is this structure which lies at the root of our ‘sickness’. She goes against the idea of individual theory and instead advocates that any healing needs to take place on a collective level, making the personal a concern for the political: “*women are messed over, not messed up*” (Hanisch, 1969, p. 2).

3.1.2 ‘Do It Yourself’: Caring for one another

Code (2015) draws a strong analogy between caring and knowledge. In a feminist vein, coming to about know xyz is coming to care for xyz. We develop a sense of stewardship and advocacy for the kind of knowledge we (partially) discover in our research. And we take on responsibility to make this knowledge heard, to have our participants’ affective dispositions become part of a wider academic discourse on what it means to be and become well. This is what Code (2006, 2015) refers to as epistemic responsibility: “people singly and collectively—indeed, singly *because* collectively—are *responsible* for what and how they know, on an understanding of responsibility that is as epistemological as it is ethical and political” (Code, 2006, p. ix).

Inevitably, then our job is not (only) one of describing wellbeing, it is one of collective caring brought about by the unavoidable nature of having been moved. Once we started feeling, listening and looking, we can start drawing connections and recognising the entrenched effects between people, power and place (Marmot et al., 2017). Caring for others and one's own wellbeing is underpinning our ability to produce knowledge about wellbeing in the first place. In other words, *we cannot properly understand the holistic complexities of wellbeing if we do not care*. This is why wellbeing is not just the outcome or object of wellbeing research, it is the very starting point and subject of wellbeing research.

As wellbeing researchers (feminist or not), we cannot help but be moved by what we encounter in our field (of) research. In the context of doing sensitive research, Mallon and Elliot (2019) describe this as a pain by proxy through the power of empathy. That is by 'caring' how our participants experience their (lack of) wellbeing, we share their pain and might even be reminded of and reveal part of our own painful histories. But we are also moved by the neoliberal climate under which we research, that may lead to depression, stress and anxiety, more so than in most other professional groups (Berg, Huijbens & Larsen, 2016; Mountz et al., 2017). The question is what we do with that emotion, how to address it? How legitimate is my own emotion over that of my participants, for instance? And why would we keep these emotions separate in the first place? That is, to what degree can an emotion be collective? How do we join our affective dispositions in the struggle of being heard and seen, of being well together? It is here where the sting of more recent feminist thought lies (Butler, 2015; Segal, 2017) and where we can think of a feminist knowledge production as a practice of coming together to care, that is care for one self and care for one another (Code, 2015; Martin, Myers & Viseu, 2015; Mountz et al., 2015).

3.1.3 'Know thy powers': Introducing queer tools

In this chapter, I am therefore concerned with how *we come to know and care about wellbeing* (or that what we refer to as wellbeing) vis-à-vis its affective, complex, interdisciplinary and politically charged backdrop (Alexandrova, 2017; Dodge et al., 2012; MacKian, 2009; Sointu, 2005). That is to say, I am interested in the field of

wellbeing research as a whole, and want to understand better how different explanations, definitions and epistemic cultures can jointly participate in a discourse around the multiple facets of what wellbeing means to different people in different contexts, without homogenising these views. How do we, as researchers, not necessarily fall back on familiar assumptions, naïve interpretations, available discourses? What does it mean to know about wellbeing in one way but not another? It is with these questions in mind, that this chapter conceives a feminist epistemological framework in the shape of six queer tools for wellbeing research.

I am calling these tools ‘queer’ because being queer or queering, following Ahmed (2006), is a way of orientation towards other objects. This orientation is not just a sexual one in that one may desire other bodies, it is also a phenomenological one in that one attunes to other ways of being conscious, of experiencing and feeling, especially those that are less proximate to us (Ahmed, 2006; Butler, 1993). By orienting ourselves towards other, less proximate bodies (bodies of flesh, bodies of a community, organisational bodies, bodies of knowledge, institutional bodies), a queer approach may help us uncover and question the political structures that underpin the ways we research and define wellbeing and help us orient towards new ways that address the deeper causes of poor mental health and wellbeing in our communities. A feminist approach distinguishes itself from other critical approaches towards wellbeing research and epistemology by putting emphasis on bodies and affect, linking both to wider structural inequalities. As such, it helps to address the ways on how wellbeing knowledge is deeply connected with our own and one another’s dispositions and situatedness.

3.2 Six queer tools for wellbeing research

3.2.1 ONE: Situating knowledge: against objectivity and for understanding ourselves and each other

"The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together

imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another." (Haraway, 1991, p. 193)

This first tool is one that chips away at the concept of knowledge as something perfect, concrete and absolute and introduces it as partial, embodied and constitutive. Feminist epistemologists or sociologists of sciences thus build a body of critique against a more positivist, 'masculine' model of sciences, concerned with universal rules, rationality, hierarchy, control, as well as, artificially created binaries between body/mind, nature/culture or object/subject. (Fox-Keller, 1983; Harding, 2008; Harding & Norberg, 2005). In the social sciences, this mode of knowledge production has historically assigned simple causal relationships between people and certain social categories and order ('ill', 'deprived', 'poor', 'black', 'gay', 'homeless', 'single parent', 'foreign'). These types of simple explanation then allow institutions to govern everyday lives in a way that is conducive to sustaining the social order and mechanisms of control perpetuating social injustices (Harding & Norberg, 2005). Knowledge is therefore, intimately connected to practices of power that become inscribed on to our bodies (Butler, 2015). In other words, what is known and how it is known has a direct effect on people's wellbeing and their chances for a good life. Knowledge about wellbeing is performative of wellbeing.

To challenge these practices, feminists, like Haraway (1991) put forward a radically different way of knowing. Rather than deterministically assigning 'reality' to a neatly contained group of people, a feminist standpoint recognises that there is no 'real' that awaits to be discovered by an objective researcher, no fixed categories or universal patterns to be established. Instead, the knower is always situated in her specific standpoint in the world. Haraway's epistemology of situatedness has been criticised for putting forward "a politics of 'sites' and 'spaces' from which materiality is largely vacated" (Katz, 2001, p. 1230), and therefore without attention to the globally conditioned effects of inequality (Katz, 2001; see also Swarr & Nagar, 2012). Indeed, our personal histories, different type of bodies, and different local as well as global socio-spatial contexts around us determine not only how we experience the world around us through affects, bodily sensations or narratives, but also determine what kind of knowledge these experiences produce.

Notwithstanding possible criticism, an epistemology of situatedness is not to say that we cannot put ourselves in the shoes of someone else or exchange our experiences with someone else, in fact, as Haraway's quote above makes clear, it is *because* our knowing is partial, that we can join with an other's knowing-imperfectly and without claims to absoluteness. In wellbeing research, giving a voice to bodies of knowledge that are normally excluded from knowledge production (for example, experts by experience (Rose, 1999)) may help stitch together an inclusive and porous web of *multiple partial knowers*. Such a web may challenge the often monolithic, inflexible and ready-formed solutions and therapies vulnerable people are often offered, specifically in the context of mental health and wellbeing care (Swift, 2017). In short, a feminist epistemology acknowledges: first, that we can only know things partially and how that understanding is always plural and in discourse with other ways of knowing; and, second, that by appreciating this plurality we can open up a holistic framework for understanding each other and ourselves. The next tool will focus on possible barriers that feminists might encounter when building such a holistic framework.

3.2.2 TWO: Breaking down walls: Power and inclusion

“Feminism: how we survive the consequences of what we come up against by offering new ways of understanding what we come up against [...] A feminist job is also ‘a banging your head against a brick wall job.’ Our job description is a wall description” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 22 and p. 110)

The next tool exposes and disrupts wall building. Wall building, for Ahmed (2017), is the practice of drawing lines of inclusion and exclusion— specifically around the context of diversity in academia. There is ample evidence to support the claim that more diverse research and learning environments, make for more creative and innovative (research) outputs; simply because people with different backgrounds have different experiences and will approach the same question in different ways. This could help fellow collaborators and colleagues to question their own assumptions and build a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of their respective field (Bodla et al., 2018; Cunningham, 2011; Guillaume et al., 2013).

Inclusive environments then need to include voices who did not have the privilege of going to university and participating in academic or public discourse often because of where and as who they were born. Women, people of colour, people with low socio-economic capital or voices of the global South are often facing certain barriers when trying to enter the realms where knowledge is produced or challenged. Their voices remain either completely unheard by the virtue of not being seen, or muffled, that is they want to speak and have something to say but are perceived as nothing but noise on the other side of an imaginary wall that separates 'us' from 'them' (see Rancière, Panagia & Bowlby, 2001).

To better understand the 'us and 'them', we need to ask: who are today's wellbeing researchers? Where do they come from? How will their dispositions and their subjectivities determine the type of knowledge they are likely to produce? And what stops these silenced voices to step into the realms of knowledge production? As often these people belong to the group of the privileged, we must, on top of asking these questions, analyze and discover what prevents marginalized voices from stepping into this knowledge production and make sure they can make it into discourse.

What prevents an inclusive discourse? according to Ahmed (2015), is walls. Walls continue to exist because people in power (the 'masters') are invested in *not* seeing them, as any new, diverse arrival would naturally widen the scope and scale of the kind of research carried out (Mountz et al., 2015). This move toward more inclusive research would therefore also usher in a substantial shift in decision power, control, and influence that might be felt in terms of a cut in salary, research time, funding or loss of senior positions (ibid.).

Thus we have a decision to make that entails real consequence to the field of wellbeing research: do we invest funding and time to research wellbeing solutions that are effective for white, middle-class people who can afford to take out hours of their day to follow a social prescribing course and volunteer in their community; or are we looking for solutions for harder to reach people, like single mothers living in a low-income community who simply cannot leave their children unattended in the afternoon to join a knitting group (Riley, Corkhill & Morris, 2013)? What type

of knowledge would we produce that we could use to achieve this?, that is what different ways of understanding wellbeing would we build, if we created knowledge environments with no walls towards participation? What different solutions, policy recommendations and interventions may we co-create if we allowed bodies from that other side of the wall to speak and be heard?

Taking a more personal tone, Ahmed (2015) further urges us to reflect on the ways in which we are bruised and hit by the walls, inviting us here, to share with others our experiences of coming up against walls. By doing so we can also begin to empathise with voices that were excluded from prominent discourses and giving them a voice by proxy. We may assemble the ghosts of those left behind and insisting that they, too, matter (Butler, 2015).

As of yet, wellbeing and policy researchers continue to research in silos are failing to address the entrenched needs of these hard to reach groups simply *because* the walls are drawn in such a way that keeps them from collaborating pluralistically and holistically around the wicked problems of wellbeing (Reid & Smith, 2018). Specifically, in the context of wellbeing research, the widely-spread understanding of wellbeing stems from the disciplines of economics and psychology and often looks at wellbeing as an ex post facto list of attributes that describe “static, articulate and abstracted individuals” (Reid & Smith, 2018, p. 816) but does not do justice to the context-specific, emergent, outward-looking subjectivities feeling well (Atkinson, 2013; Reid & Smith, 2018).

3.2.3 THREE: Emancipate from your discipline:

Interdisciplinarity I

“If we follow disciplinary habits of tracing disciplinary-defined causes through the corresponding disciplinary-defined effects, we will miss all the crucial intra-actions among these forces that fly in the face of any specific set of disciplinary concerns” (Barad, 2003, p. 810)

A conclusion on the necessity to break down walls is also central in studies on interdisciplinarity, especially in regard to better understanding complex social

issues across different academic disciplines (Klein, 2012; Weingart, 2012). Therefore, the next tool is intended to encourage interdisciplinary collaborations through the emancipation of oneself from one's discipline's often specific and narrow ways of thinking and speaking. Indeed, "[n]owhere is the need for genuine interdisciplinarity more evident than in research related to health and wellbeing. For a human being is patently a totality and cannot be studied as a congeries of distinct and separable parts." (Bhaskar, Danermark & Price, 2018, p. 3). When it comes to getting to the root of what makes a liveable life, it simply makes no sense to unreflectively follow the gospel of any single discipline as "a person cannot be perceived as being made up of a number of parts that relate to distinct disciplines" (ibid.). For instance, for one discipline to only look at brain functions and another to solely look at the environment, when these are so intimately connected in the totality of human existence, we have the risk of missing perspectives that would otherwise help us gain a better understanding of what wellbeing actually is and where how it emerges (Alexandrova, 2015; Callard & Fitzgerald, 2015; Lederbogen et al., 2011).

Although the term 'interdisciplinary' is used generously to describe a number of wellbeing research projects, it is argued that most such projects merely present "a fragmentary pastiche of disciplines" (Turner cited in Bhaskar, Danermark & Price, 2018, p. 19), a piecemeal of different opinions rather than truly interdisciplinary, intellectual integration. And despite a rich historical background in international, interdisciplinary health collaborations (think of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, for instance), there is very little critical awareness of how interdisciplinary wellbeing research actually works (Bhaskar, Danermark & Price, 2018). Sayer (2011, p.14) links this to mutual hostilities across departments and faculties who, because of ongoing competitions for funding, have an interest of being perceived as different and distinct from their intellectual neighbours, despite possible synergies in interests. This may lead to parochialism and disciplinary reductionism that inhibit understanding of and communication about complex social (and socio-medical) mechanisms (see also tool 1). For instance:

- Different disciplines might use different terms that describe the same or a very similar concept (consider for instance the overlap in the terms:

happiness, subjective wellbeing, pleasure and joy; or belonging, togetherness and community)

- Or they might use the same term to describe different concepts (think about the how the term ‘resilience’ can broadly refer to how a community is bouncing back to normal after a state of crisis, achieving environmental sustainability (Fazey et al., 2018); or how de-centralised health care infrastructures give ‘power back’ to local health care providers (Eley et al., 2018; Pencheon, 2015); or the idea of growing from personal experience after traumatic experiences (Ahmed, 2010))
- Or they use a term colloquially without any reference to concepts (note, for instance, the vast and varied literatures behind colloquially used terms like: practice, process, identity, health or power)

These different terms and meanings arise because each discipline carries with it an epistemological culture that, to some degree, has to funnel complexity into concrete explanations, where cause can follow effect into a logical and coherent structure, necessary for wider science communication (cf. Barad, 2003, p. 810; Bowler & Morus, 2010, Callard, 2003; Fleck, 1980; Schoenberger, 2001).

Citational practice

Ahmed ([2013], 2017) argues that these historically-imbued, linear ways of understanding may also be linked to chains of citational practices as a “rather successful reproductive technology, a way of reproducing the world around certain bodies” (Ahmed, 2013), thereby shaping the very formation and function of academic disciplines and their specific ‘canons’ (Mott & Cockayne, 2017; Keighren, Abrahamsson & della Dora, 2012). Citational practices actively shape disciplinary habits, to come back to Barad’s words in the beginning and thereby *routinely reproduce* the interests, experiences and dispositions of (scholarly) bodies that are “white, male, able-bodied, economically privileged, heterosexual, and cisgendered⁵” (Mott & Cockayne, 2017, p. 955). Arguably, these bodies experience less discrimination, struggle and exclusion in their organisational, professional and social roles because the epistemic environments around them bodies are designed

⁵ Cisgender is when the sex assigned at birth matches a person’s gender identity later in life.

in a way that helps them flourish and grow. At the same time these environments will make sure that other, less proximate bodies will be unable to thrive. For these bodies, environments created on the basis of specific citational practices are harsh and hostile (see tool 2). Citational practices can therefore actively produce exclusion and discrimination and lead to silo-thinking; that is the idea that one citational practice will not speak to another, insisting on each other's historical uniqueness (Ahmed, 2017; Mott & Cockayne, 2017).

However, citational practices may also be used as a deliberate tool to produce new and different kind of practices. For instance, Annemarie Mol (2002) and Sara Ahmed (2017), two feminists concerned with health, happiness and wellbeing, actively choose to only cite female authors, or (in case of Mol), those which have a feminist standpoint. This is, of course, a political choice that clearly states: if we want to create inclusive discourses around what it means to flourish, we need to, first and foremost, consider the experiences of those bodies less likely to flourish in the current social climate. We need to consider that socially marginalised people might express their affective dispositions and subjective experiences through different type of media and spread them through non-academic channels⁶.

This means in order to challenge and make inclusive our citational practices, we need to *consciously cite*, and give a platform to, insights from other types of media, disciplines and voices than one's own, e.g. from the Global South, from lesser known journals, from research published in a language not native to the reader, and from books and from non-academic sources like blogs (Mott and Cockayne, 2017; Swarr and Nagar, 2012). Adjusting the way we reproduce citational practices, may help break down cultures of disciplinary reductionism and silo thinking (Sayer, 2011) that is inhibiting intra-action between different disciplines vis-à-vis their epistemic environments (Barad, 2003).

⁶ Audre Lorde's cancer journals (1985) or Sara Ahmed ongoing blog feministkilljoy.com are both good examples of how two academics choose to write about their personal struggle and ways towards wellbeing in non-traditional academic formats.

3.2.4 FOUR: Discipline your emancipation:

Interdisciplinarity II

“Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic....Only within that interdependency of difference strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters” (Lorde, 1984)

The next tool is almost antithetical to the previous one. Instead of emancipating oneself from the restraints of disciplinary discourse, we also need to subjugate ourselves to these constraints; this tool is one that helps us garner power through emphasising polarities and differences by means of subjugation. In their book on interdisciplinarity Callard and Fitzgerald (2015) are critical of the ‘typical’ advice given to interdisciplinary scholars: “relations of power need either to be *overcome* or at least *faced up* through reinvigorated forms of transparent dialogue, mutual respect, frank talking, and manifestations of emotions appropriate to the situation, such as anger” (p. 98). They felt this approach acted as though the grounds they are working from was like a “chessboard of disciplines” (p. 81) - even, symmetrical and purely transactional (cf. Rabinow, 2009).

In other words, they criticise the belief that when researchers from two or more different disciplines can speak up for themselves and communicate effectively and self-reflectively (see Hemmings (2012) on failure of reflexivity in feminist thought), they will eventually reach some middle-ground or compromise. From their experience of researching between sociology, human geography and neurosciences, Callard and Fitzgerald (2015) contend that this sort of advice is creating false fantasies of mutuality when in reality financial, epistemic and social power is hardly ever evenly distributed between different actors. For instance, different researchers might have access to different departmental pots of money, have different writing practices and styles, and engage in different citational practices that afford them different recognisability or acceptance in different communities.

What we need to come to terms with then is our own weakness and short-comings. The fact that within any interdisciplinary research collaboration on wellbeing there *will* be disagreements, tensions and viewpoints that might have been relevant but hidden in blind spots. Because wellbeing means so many different things to different people and is such a multi-facetted field of study and single research study has to battle with these negative spaces, the known unknowns as well as the unknown unknowns. In field research, too, we have to come to terms with the voices we could not reach in our recruitment efforts and the depth and nuance that interviewees were not willing or able to share within our own time constraints. Whereas this is of course for any type of research, the stakes are arguably much higher in wellbeing research as how we come to know about something contributes to how we enact it (see tool six).

And so when collaborating wellbeing researchers are faced with a number of ethical and practical dilemma: is it more important to understand the individual experiences of mental health service users, or should we talk more to front line workers and GPs, or should we talk to politicians, or should we perhaps do policy analysis; are we interested on making interventions on a local level with one single community or do we want to take an ecological view on the mental health challenges at hand? Whose opinions matters most and from which direction should we tackle our research question? There often is no one right answer, and different disciplines are likely to be interested in different units of analysis and therefore approach research design with different priorities in mind. While this is true for a number of research on complex problems, it is especially pertinent for wellbeing research. Choosing approach x over y carries with it a potential violence in that it reduces a person's complex subjectivities and relational embeddedness in biological, social, economic and environmental systems into a single disciplinary pursuit and monolithic block of analysis of what might make someone 'well' (Bhaskar, Danermark & Price, 2018).

Again, this is not bad in and of itself and to some degree necessary but what Callard and Fitzgerald (2015) want to draw our attention to is how this happens and with what possible consequences. Specifically, they talk about how as wellbeing researcher we often need to subjugate our own interests to those with whom we

collaborate, including participants, funders, colleagues or reviewers. That is to say, by giving up the fantasy of mutual reflexivity (see also Hemmings, 2012, p. 153), we may (temporarily) accept a certain set of definitions of wellbeing that may not be native to our understanding of what wellbeing is or how it is operationalised as a research concept. For example, we may adapt theories from the psychology literature that have set out to measure how well we feel and how well we function, in order to trace improvements of subjective and objective factors of wellbeing over a period of time (e.g. based on Ryff & Keyes, 1995). This may serve the purpose of evidencing to funding bodies that a specific research project has ‘impact’, despite the fact that you may object to a simplified and atomistic tickbox-approach to understanding what is essentially a relational practice (Smith & Reid, 2018). In this example, you would subjugate your philosophical stance for the purpose of measuring impact and gaining institutional support.

Through that moulding they might lose some of their edges, may need to give up some form of power, a sense of ‘standing your corner’. But on the other hand, through that subjugation they may also harness another kind of power that allows them to change and influence discourse from within, by intentionally using the language of those in power in a playful way (cf. Katz (1996) on minor theory). The key word here is intentionally. Intentional decisions mean that, at one point, we had a choice and were asked to consent in an informed way to the option that we chose. Here, Balmer (2013) draws parallels to sadomasochistic sex practices, like bondage, and puts forward the types of self-discovery and pleasure we may encounter when wilfully subjugating.

This is a notion of interdisciplinarity that runs somewhat counter to the idea of democratic knowledge production by means of wall destruction (e.g. Ahmed, 2010; Harding & Norberg, 2005), but perhaps opens up more adaptable, strategic and emergent ways towards bringing together otherwise incommensurable views and interests while appreciating that there will always remain the not yet chartered.

3.2.5 FIVE: Claiming truthfulness in a post-truth era

“Our fieldwork showed that in medical practices a lot of work is done to coordinate between versions of reality. The politics, here, is not one of otherness. In a first instance, it is about fights; not between people (a politics of who) but between versions of reality (a politics of what).” (Mol, 2014)

The fifth tool is a normative tool; against the backdrop of a ‘post-truth’ era it helps establish a framework for truthfulness in wellbeing discourse. Truthfulness can be defined as “a pervasive suspiciousness, a readiness against being fooled, an eagerness to see through appearances” (Williams, 2002, p.1). In contrast to truth, truthfulness has a history. It is imbued with social structures and politics of exclusion; as a concept truthfulness actively engages with the tension that comes with becoming suspicious and denying certain claims to knowledge (Hacking, 2005; Williams, 2002).

I introduce this concept here because, if every body of knowledge from across different disciplines and even outside disciplines can claim a place in scientific discourse around wellbeing, we need to make sure that we do not allow lies, hate speech or capitalist growth fantasies into these discourses. We must prevent the manipulation and instrumentalisation of the discourses of being and becoming well to ensure they do not only benefit those already in power (Cederström & Spicer, 2015; Code, 2015; Ehrenreich, 2009). As an example, take the infamous red bus that was part of the Brexit campaign that claimed: “We send the EU £350 million a week, let's fund our NHS⁷ instead”. The promise for improved health care struck a deep cord, especially, with more rural low-income communities hoping and yearning for better wellbeing services and more social justice (Loewenthal, 2016). Later, this claim turned out to be completely unfounded which goes to show how people's vulnerabilities can be exploited to serve specific (political) interests by citing ‘facts’ that are, in fact, just tools for (voter) manipulation.

In a post-truth era (Neimark et al., 2019), where opinions, fears and fact are often conflated, how can we make sure when we are producing knowledge about

⁷ NHS is the UK's National Health Service that has undergone a lot of recent cuts, hitting people living in precarious conditions the hardest (Eley et al., 2018)

wellbeing, we can still claim a certain degree of validity, responsibility and advocacy (Code, 2015). We must as scholars, not perpetuate the perverted discourses that often lie at the root of inequality, marginalisation and depression. I introduce here a tool to check whether and how some wellbeing research is perhaps more truthful than others (Hacking, 2005; Harding, 2008; Harstock, 1983; Sayer, 2009)?

Although there is no simple feminist yardstick for measuring whose opinion is more true or right, feminist theory advocates to ‘stay with the trouble’ of these debates and not shying away from challenging the misrepresentations of facts, and offers alternative explanations of the lives of other, perhaps more precarious, bodies who matter just as much (Butler, 2015; Haraway, 2016; Hekman, 1997). It is this dialectical movement, the struggle between different knowers who converse and move with different human and non-human actors, imaginations and sensibilities. It is within these movement that something like truthfulness emerges. Here, ‘truthfulness’ doesn’t belong to any one single entity, it is forever ephemeral and veracious, kept alive and valid through the heat, intensity and energy generated in debates, refusals, tensions, troubles, or ‘fights about version of reality’ between different bodies to come back to Mol’s (2014) words above.

Focussing on this vitality for a moment (Rose, 2013), knowledge becomes ‘good’ or ‘true’ when it moves and can be moved across a spectrum, in flux with and folded through time and space, never rigid, never smooth, never complete, always responsive and situated. Truthfulness then can be defined as a struggle, rather than being a transcendental idea, between marginal and dominant voices (Hemmings, 2012) where the end goal is to represent all voices. Truthfulness becomes a crucial part of caring and sharing (Code, 2015) and constant renegotiation of knowledge by considering the multiple voices/versions of reality/ definitions of wellbeing that speak and are spoken to, listen and are listened to (cf. Mol, 2012).

‘Truthfulness’ emerges as a process of evaluation against these multiple definitions and the ability to move between them, settling at neither, never becoming a single or compromised ‘it’ to agree on (cf. Fraser, 1985). This lets us be open toward evolving definitions in response to these changing dispositions in time and space. In a post-truth era, ‘true’ or ‘good’ wellbeing knowledge will be able to join in these struggles and conversations, to stitch together with some and form alliances

without becoming singular. By process of elimination, those claims that cannot join in these debates, either because they are not willing to listen or because they knowingly discriminate or offend other knowers, cannot claim truthfulness.

3.2.6 SIX: Making other worlds

"By accepting that how we represent the world contributes to enacting that world, we collapse the distinction between epistemology and ontology."
(Gibson-Graham, 2014, p. 149).

Finally, when battling with questions of knowledge production we must consider questions of epistemology (study of knowledge) and ontology (study of being); i.e. questions of how our role and experience in society contributes to how we come to know and what we come to know about being and becoming well. This final tool is a performative one; it brings about change by critiquing the split between ontology and epistemology as a "metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhumans, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse" (Barad, 2007, p. 185).

Critiques of dualistic thinking are also pertinent in wellbeing research that question the biomedical idea of health as a split between wellness and illness, looking at deficits rather than towards ways of flourishing (MacKian, 2009). Such dualistic thinking, however, does not appreciate that one might feel well within an illness, for instance one might have high wellbeing despite hearing voices, something that is traditionally considered as pathologic (Corstens et al., 2014), or women with chronic pain conditions may still live fulfilling lives, despite having to adapt to changes in how they can manage their everyday life (Juuso et al., 2011). Thinking about wellbeing non-dualistically therefore has real world consequences how we treat and care for those labelled 'un-well' and 'well'.

Gibson-Graham (2008, 2014) therefore not only consider what their research *says about* the world, but also what it *does to* the world. This is where research can become performative, by representing it in a way that brings into focus different types of narratives and engages with voices on the margins, creating a space for counter-narratives (Hemming, 2012) that fuel heat and debate, changing the

landscape of that which is being enacted within. In that context, Waddock (2015,2016) calls for new cultural 'myths' and stories, which she refers to as memes, that can create a counter-weight to growth-oriented practices and can help restore dignity and wellbeing in a holistic way (2016). By collapsing the sharp distinction between ontology and epistemology, it becomes conceivable that new memes of knowing will also produce new worlds of being. Hence, I argue knowledge production is no longer a reproduction of our environment 'as it is'; instead it is a distortion and experience of our environment 'as it could be', stressing here that it could be different. An kind of different that is concerned with more hopeful and just futures enabling flourishing and wellbeing across the societal spectrum.

The question is how to do that. Gibson-Graham (2008), relating to the economy, propose to bring about change in three ways, which I have slightly reframed and adapted in the context of wellbeing:

Ontological reframing

Much like the economy, being well comes in many different and sometimes unexpected shapes and colours, not all of which are part of our vocabulary. To appreciate what works for wellbeing, we need to start broadening our vocabulary and look at practices of healing, support and companionship not typically associated with what we expect wellbeing to be or look like (think of prescriptive models like NEF 5 ways to wellbeing⁸) (Healy, 2008; Smith & Reid, 2018).

Re-reading for difference to excavate possibilities

Gibson-Graham frame this point as a call for attunement towards diversity and the plight of those not yet heard and seen. But rather than this being an exercise of differentiation it may be seen as a practice of finding commonalities across differences, to recognise one another's irreconcilable otherness, while at the same time acknowledging how experiences of low mood, anxiety, anger, stress and disempowerment may be structurally similar. This acknowledgement of the shared

⁸ The New Economic Foundation (NEF) 5 ways to wellbeing is a policy framework that focusses on connecting, being active, taking notice, giving and learning (Aked et al., 2009)

experience may then become the ground for a feeling of togetherness and initiate collective healing through a joining of forces, for instance through assembling (Butler, 2017).

Creativity to generate actual possibilities

In the context of doing (wellbeing) research, creativity is pivotal in a number of ways. Art-based methods, for instance, may help us to understand someone else's experience more fully. By co-creating knowledge through creative methods, we may join into a shared space of vulnerability and understanding. Through creative recruitment techniques we may be able to widen our sample and become more inclusive in those who we research with. And by analysing our data creatively, we are able to draw out new counter-narratives and allow for distortion of our assumptions and that of the literature. It is in these practices of distortion that we can create room for othernesses of experiences, emotions and stories, where it becomes clearer what works for whom and under what circumstances.

These three ways of thinking aim to open up new ways to approach wellbeing research not only as a practice of scholarship, but also one of activism and change. These struggles are always already emotionally charged and remind us of how one's personal wellbeing may be a consequence of wider socio-political inequalities. By collapsing the distinction between ontology and epistemology, we may open up non-dualistic ways to explore more diverse approaches towards wellbeing that can help create more hopeful and inclusive futures.

3.3 Conclusions: Closing the toolbox

In this chapter I have argued that a new set of tools is needed that can challenge the "master's tools", tools that are designed to sustain the kind of practices that keep power and privilege in the hands of the masters, leaving out less proximate bodies and voices.

These six tools come together to:

- vii) acknowledge that any finding is by definition incomplete and deeply situated in a specific body (body of flesh, body of knowledge, institutional body);
- viii) expose and chip away at the walls that marginalised and disenfranchised knowers bump up against by questioning and widening citational practices to add deeper intra-action between disciplines;
- ix) breaking up citational practices by assembling different bodies
- x) giving up fantasies of interdisciplinary mutuality and wilfully subjugating
- xi) insist that truthfulness matters;
- xii) collapse the distinction between ontology and epistemology and bring about change by way of knowing and enacting alternatives.

Naturally, some of these tools are made from the same cloth and overlap, while others stand strongly on their own. Some tools are an invitation for personal reflection whereas others demand collective action. Together, they bring a cohesive epistemological framework for all of those interested in exposing and addressing the underlying structural inequalities that support the master's house thereby perpetuating wellbeing inequalities.

This chapter has laid out a framework for queering wellbeing research that brought together different feminist epistemologies and philosophies of sciences. In contrast to other critical approaches, a feminist standpoint focuses on affect and body; where the personal becomes inseparable from the political. Any type of knowledge production, inevitably, produces an architecture that by virtue of being a politically structural, favours some forms of life over others. Such an architecture can, under a hegemonic order, actively disadvantage the lives of precarious communities, who typically struggle more than others with mental health and wellbeing issues (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). To challenge and change these wellbeing inequalities, we also need to challenge and change how we come to know wellbeing, and create more inclusive, collaborative and strategic ways to create structures of knowledge production that redistribute power and voice in a way that helps to shape more caring forms of knowledge. A type of knowledge that enacts change by ways of representing alternative ways of survival and growth, and can challenge untruthful

or power-perpetuating narratives of what a good life should look like. As such, the toolbox is not just a valuable resource for feminists, but also other critical, post-colonial, post-structuralist and participatory wellbeing researchers, scholars or students, who have the ability, and thus the responsibility, to address wellbeing inequalities; attuning to and caring for their own and other's bodily dispositions and subjectivities.

CHAPTER 4

Dwelling: On the Design,
Implementation and Analysis of 'Story
Houses' as Multi-Modal Research
Method

Abstract: *This article explores how dwelling—a mindful unfolding of thinking and being within the cosmos as a whole—can offer a useful lens to look at the deeper layer of mental health service users’ lived experiences, specifically in regards to the feeling of ‘being at home’. To do so, this article reflects on how dwelling has shaped design of a multi-modal research method—Story Houses—that combines poem writing, working with materials and interviews in a workshop environment. Methodological implications of the method are considered in regards to dwelling in the moment, abstracting time and space, unfolding memories and thinking through metaphors. A study with 18 mental health and wellbeing service users, 10 of which were interviewed, looks into the constant unravelling of seeming opposites like alone/together and explores the fantastical metaphor ‘sea’. It does so by adapting thematic analysis to mirror a dwelling lens. As a method, Story Houses can help create, open up and invite us to dwell in the non-literal, evocative and ephemeral landscapes of human existence.*

Keywords: dwelling, metaphors, phenomenology, arts-based methods, multi-modal, poems, making, Story House

4.1 Introduction

In this methods paper, I explore how dwelling, as both a methodology and theory, offers a useful lens to look at the lived experiences of mental health service users. Dwelling can be understood as a mindful unfolding of thinking and being that looks at our existence within the cosmos as a *whole*; as such dwelling *is* being (Heidegger, 1951). There are many different ‘kinds’ of dwelling in the literature (e.g. Chia & Holt; 2006; Dekkers 2011; Easthope; 2004; Gallent, 2007; Ingold 2002; Long 2013; Todres & Galvin, 2010; Young, 1997), all relating to the importance of honing in on how we move through and interact with our environments. As we become more and more enmeshed in and attuned to the world around us, we slowly move towards a sense of letting-be and oneness with the outside world. Within that oneness, Heidegger and others suggest, dichotomies, like inside/outside, active/passive or nature/culture present themselves as artificially created analytical distinctions with no relation to how things *actually* present themselves to us through in our lived experiences. This is why we can say that within a dwelling perspective, as a *whole* mode of being, artificially created dichotomies unravel and expose a deeper layer of human existence (Dahlberg, Todres & Galvin, 2009; Sarvimäki, 2006). Mental health and wellbeing service users often experience a plethora of complex social, socio-economic, emotional and health problems that do not necessarily lend themselves to clear-cut analytical distinctions or research methods that tend to produce single explanations (Dahlberg, Todres & Galvin, 2009; Mallon & Elliot, 2019). This paper therefore asks: how can a dwelling lens, both as a methodology and theory, help us better understand the complexly layered lived experiences of mental health service users and do justice to the entangled, complex ways of being and becoming well?

To help answer this question, this paper designs and implements a multi-modal research method, that I refer to as ‘Story Houses’; this method combines poem writing, working with materials and interviewing. Whilst there are a number of phenomenological approaches that seek to understand lived experiences through multi-modal, arts-based methods (Boden, Larkin & Iyer, 2019; Finlay, 2012), they struggle to fully honour the totality of experiences across different types of data. I

argue that a dwelling perspective may help explore a full range of human experiences by artificially creating dichotomies relevant to a participant's experiences and then unravelling them in the process of the research. The process of this unravelling was meaningful to the participants' experiences in that it allowed them to share the tensions and struggles of accepting that what is and yet finding the energy to propel themselves forward towards better wellbeing.

The first part of this methods paper considers the process of designing appropriate research methods for a dwelling perspective, in regard to poem writing, working with materials, narrative interviewing, sampling and data analysis. In the second part, I further dwell on the methodological reflections of the method as a whole, specifically in reference to dwelling in the moment, placing oneself and the use of metaphors. In the third part, I briefly show some of the findings of a study that explored the lived experiences of 18 mental health service users.

4.2. Dwelling as methodology and theory

In this paper, I understand wellbeing as both a methodology and theory (although much like other dichotomies theory and practice of dwelling shall equally unravel in this paper).

4.2.1 Dwelling as methodology

As a methodology, dwelling is concerned with attuning to and responding to the phenomenological underpinnings of lived experiences more widely. Phenomenologically inclined research methods thus develop a tendency to be curious, patient, attentive, vulnerable, sensitive, and engaged towards other people as well as one's own presuppositions (Finlay, 2014; Galvin & Todres, 2013; Heidegger, 1977; Husserl, 2012; Merleau-Ponty, 1968). Methodologically speaking, dwelling stresses the importance of movement and 'being in process' which allows dwellers to have a relative sense of freedom as they fluctuate between and beyond either ends of a dichotomous spectrum (Dahlberg, Todres, & Galvin, 2009). The phenomenological lens allows researchers to hold and examine a tension between own assumptions and the meanings that are revealed to them in the process of

researching others, which yields deeply honest and rich accounts of people's lived experiences.

For example, Edmund Husserl, one of the founding figures in phenomenology, famously proclaimed 'zu den Sachen selbst', translated as 'to the things themselves', meaning a return to the way that things are given in lived experiences, that is in a deeply intuitive and non-rationalist way (2012). Likewise, Heidegger suggests that every phenomenon has a different, and for it essential, mode of encounter. The researcher's job, following Heidegger, is to make room for this encounter by accepting the phenomenon's relationships to its environment and attune ourselves to its otherness, while leaving our own presuppositions behind as best as we can (Finlay, 2014; Heidegger, 1977). This also involves honing in to the totality of the experience:

"The meaning is not on the phrase like the butter on the bread, like a second layer of 'psychic reality' spread over the sound: it is the totality of what is said"
(Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 155).

In practical terms, this meant two things when reading text for themes. First, I needed to bracket my own assumptions and wishful answers to my research questions and second, I needed to listen carefully for meanings 'between the lines', things that were not obvious to me at first but appeared to me by using intuition, imagination, and intimacy with the participants' lived experiences (Finlay, 2014).

4.2.2 Dwelling as theory

As a theory, I am specifically interested in dwelling as a way to conceptualise wellbeing (Galvin & Todres, 2013; Todres & Galvin, 2010). Here, wellbeing may be understood as an experience of being in the world that moves us 'forward with time, space, others, mood and our bodies' (Todres & Galvin 2010, p. 5), helping us to explore the possibilities that lie ahead. Dwelling as wellbeing also evokes the rich concept of 'home' as both a material and imaginative site (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 22). In this vein, wellbeing may be understood as a feeling of being at home, a sense of feeling comfortable with and knowing where we are and who we are; a sense of acceptance, rootedness or peace (Todres & Galvin, 2010). It is in this 'free

sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence' (Heidegger, 1993 [1951], p.351) that we may ground ourselves in the present moment and build an intimate relatedness to one's environment. Following Heidegger, Galvin and Todres (2013) speak of home-coming, the idea of a return to self, where we can safely unfold and unwind, a homestead to preserve one's energy, as well as a sense of letting go of the hectic life outside of 'home'.

However, Galvin and Todres also introduce a second dimension to dwelling as essential to wellbeing, namely dwelling-mobility. Here, the authors speak of an energy, flow and sense of adventure. The drive to go out explore, try something new, change things up, get out of one's comfort zone. It is a space where we can reach out to others and broaden our horizons. The 'mobility' element to Heidegger's dwelling has also been picked up by feminist scholars (Long, 2013; Young, 1997) who stress the potential political quietism that may come with images of domesticity, specifically in regard to the image of women being culturally restrained to domestic activities. The sense of movement is therefore crucial as a tool for emancipation, as a vehicle to get out, experience something different, imagine better futures and mobilise others. For mental health service users and others, dwelling-mobility may point towards a way out of a dark spot and can help contextualise anxious thoughts in a wider set of experiences. All the while, knowing that there is a safe place to return to. This is the cyclical process of dwelling as wellbeing, stillness and movement, turning inwards and outwards, familiarity and adventure.

4.3 Research and method design

In her book on developing creative methods, Kara (2015) advises that research design and method design must flow from the research question and be theory informed. The challenge for me was therefore to design a method that reflects the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of dwelling. In general, arts-based, creative or multi-modal methods are a suitable way to engage with mental health service users' lifeworlds, which is increasingly explored in the literature (Boden, Larkin & Iyer, 2019; Davidsen, 2013; Finlay, 2009, 2012; Kara, 2013). However, at the

time of research, I found no clear guideline on how to design multi-modal research methods.

Initially, I was inspired by Grisoni's (2012; Grisoni & Collins, 2012) idea of a poem house, a method that encourages managers to cut in pieces pages of well-known poems and decorate a box with these snippets. I liked the idea of combining word with visuals but felt frustrated by the fact that participants couldn't use their own words for decorating a box and also had no other material to make their poem house their 'own'. I also continued to ask myself how this method might be adapted to suit the need of a more vulnerable population. On the basis of these reflections and after an initial pilot study, the 'Story Houses' were born- a method combining poem writing, working with materials and interviewing.

The methods were facilitated in a workshop environment, where 4–8 people came together over the course of about 2 hours to write poems and decorate their box. The workshop started out with giving out the boxes and doing a quick brainstorm of what came to people's mind about the box they were holding in their hand, I encouraged them to think of opposites like inside/outside. Participants quickly engaged with the spirit of the exercise and listed other opposites relating to boxes such as light/dark or open/closed. They also came up with other keywords such as 'boxed in', 'labelled', 'hiding', 'home' and two groups mentioned 'coffin' as an association with the box. In total, I organised and facilitated six workshops, two of which were with the same group of people. During and after the workshop I took field notes.

4.3.1 Poem writing

Poem writing is an established method in arts-based research (Kara, 2015; Miller, 2018) and can provide 'engaging, memorable insight into the uniquely individual, complex and idiosyncratic experiences' (Miller, 2018, p.8), 'a window into the heart of the human experience' (McCullis in Miller, 2018, p.8). Specifically, the use of metaphors in poem writing is seen as instrumental for bringing to the fore experiences that cannot easily be put into words (Bagnoli, 2009, p. 548).

Bishop and Willis (2014) have found that free verse poetry is especially conducive in helping people explore deeper and more complex dimensions of their existence. In their research on hope amongst children in Australia, they find that their participants started engaging with the concept of hopelessness when offered to write in free verse, which means not needing to follow rhyming or other poetic structures, whereas a strict format using classical poetic devices yielded only superficial results. On the other hand, a study by Stephenson and Rosen (2015) found that haikus, a short Japanese poem format, are a great way to get people think 'on topic' and work within restricted means which can fuel creativity. Moreover, reading through the learning resource website www.readwritethink.org I came across a section on how to take away the fear of writing poetry, which is by providing a guideline that doesn't rely on the use of poetic devices (like the free verse) but still works within a clear structure (like the haiku).

Here I came across the diamante poem. It consists of seven lines, where the first and seventh line are opposites, taking the shape of a diamond, hence the name. These opposites unravel in a middle line and are then described with two adjectives and three verbs as the poem unfolds from top to bottom, and bottom to top. The antonymic relation between the first and last line and the way that they meet and unravel in the middle, was directly guided by the literature on dwelling. Even though the structures seem complicated at first, the method has been recommended for pupils in primary education (Guillaume, 1998) and participants in my workshops often pointed out that once they got the hang of it, it was easy to do. I further handed out poem guidelines and then, in a group, we wrote a 'test poem'. I then encouraged participants to write their own poem.

Here is an example from Jacob that hints toward the potential of writing through dwelling:

Exposed

Cold, uprooted

Aching, wanting, grasping

Where every heart is

Feeling, resting, thriving

Ensconced, granted

Sheltered

I also provided the option of doing a simplified version of the diamante called the cinquain, a five-line poem that follows a very similar structure to the diamante but where the fifth line is a synonym for first line. This was the preferred option for eight participants. Participants were also given the choice of writing in free verse, which was taken up by four participants. Moreover, most participants decided to write more than one poem. The poems were transferred on a coloured piece of paper of their choice and was meant to 'live' in on a white paper box that participants were invited to decorate.

4.3.2 Working with materials: making is connecting

Visual data, like decorating a white paper box with various materials (see Figure 1), are a helpful tool to encourage thinking in metaphors or other means of abstraction (i.e. what colour is depression, anger, etc.), interviews that use images and other visual data as a point of reference therefore tend to be richer and more reflexive. They can serve as an entrance or referral point for the interview ('why don't you start off by telling me a bit about your Story House?') and help participants give less readily available answers to difficult questions (Boden & Eatough, 2014; Gillies et al., 2005; Kara, 2015). Sociologist and expert on making, David Gauntlett posits that making is connecting in his book of the same title (2018). He backs this statement up with the following three claims:

- *"Making is connecting because you have to connect things together (materials, ideas, or both) to make something new;*
- *Making is connecting because acts of creativity usually involve, at some point, a social dimension and connect us with other people;*
- *And making is connecting because through making things and sharing them in the world, we increase our engagement and connection with our social and physical environments."* (p. 6)

These three different ‘connectings’ – connecting experimentally with different materials, connecting with people and connecting with wider environment – further speaks to the dwelling dimension of the method in that we actively connect with and become part of our environments. Gauntlett (2007, p.28) cites Hegel in saying that:

“Making ‘external things’ upon which a person inevitably ‘impresses the seal of his inner being’ gives that person the opportunity to reflect upon their selfhood; ‘the inner and outer world’ is projected into ‘an object in which he recognises his own self’”

Making things can become another, and perhaps deeper, way of thinking, a non-linguistic thinking that we normally don’t get access to in standard interviews (Bagnoli, 2009, p.547, see also Mason and Davies, 2009).

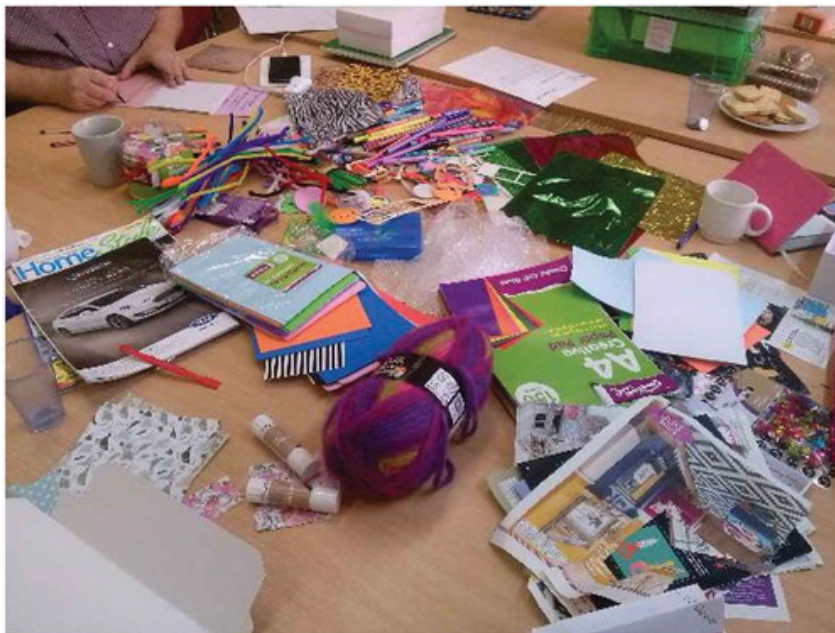


Figure 1 Story House materials

4.3.3 Narrative interviews

Another part of the Story Houses are open-ended, narrative-based interviews (Silverman, 2015, p.166) that lean on the Story House as a point of reference and conversation starter. Narrative and loosely structured interviews are characterised by asking open-ended questions that invite participants to tell a story. Often the

interviewer only has one or two main questions in mind before commencing the interview (in my case ‘tell me about your Story House’). Follow up questions or probes flow from and rely on the participants’ individual answers. ‘Swerving out’ is often encouraged as it is argued to give participants a chance to share the things that actually matter to them while contextualising certain phenomena as part of their everyday experiences (Boden, Larkin & Iyer, 2019); this also opened up a space for the ephemeral, mystical and sensorially intangible (Mason & Davies, 2009, p.599).

4.3.4 Participants and ethical approval

The study took place between July and November 2017. The sample for this study includes 18 Story House participants from three different mental health and wellbeing groups in the North of England; of those 18, 10 were subsequently interviewed. Their ages range from early twenties to 75 years and older. All participants were White British, with males and females equally represented, participants communicated a range of different mental health problems and challenges. Because all participants were active members or patients of a mental health and/or wellbeing group, they were already supported by an adequate care infrastructure and had regular check-ins with various professionals in adult social and health services. In addition, after each interview, I asked participants if they needed anything else and if they felt they had enough and suitable support. Ethical approval was granted by the University of Liverpool Ethics Committee and all participants gave their informed written and verbal consent and were informed that they may drop out at any point of the research. All names are pseudonyms and identifying information has been altered or removed.

4.3.5 Further reflections on sensitive research: closing the lid

Prior to and during my research, I grappled with a growing body of literature concerned with the ethical and emotional implications of researching sensitive topics and entering the lives of those that are stressed, hurt, disadvantaged or vulnerable (Dickson-Swift, James & Liamputtong, 2008; Lee & Lee, 2012; Mallon &

Elliott, 2019). In addition, arts-based and other non-linguistic methods can often reveal a deeper and sometimes even unconscious layer of experiences that come to the fore in the process of verbalising them in an interview (Bagnoli, 2009; Temple & McVittie, 2005). I further engaged in the possible stresses and pressures of poem writing, sometimes seen as 'high art' outside 'ordinary' people's ability (Stephenson & Rosen, 2015).

Dickson-Swift et al. (2007) find that faced with these types of challenges, health researchers often 'care', that is they are deeply invested in someone else's life, listen respectfully, critically reflect on their own experiences, or even reciprocate the disclosure of intimate information. Although these reactions are generally encouraged in the context of 'being human', they also come with an emotional toll on the researcher. More recent research on the process of researching sensitive topics shines light on the researcher's vulnerability (Campbell, 2013; Johnson & Clarke, 2003; Mallon & Elliott, 2019). As researchers, we may feel 'pain by proxy' (Moran-Ellis in Mallon and Elliott, 2019, p.3) that is we emphatically feel the pain shared with us as though it was our own. But we might also be reminded of our own pain and trauma, specifically in feminist or auto-ethnographic approaches, that take the researcher's personal experience as possible starting point to their data collection (Laliberté & Schurr, p.2016).

'Although I did not specifically set out to find out about my own wellbeing, the process of researching the experiences of mental health service users brought to light many of my own emotional baggage. I felt overwhelmed with the raw force that people's stories had on me, they stayed with me, dragged me down, they immobilised me, froze me. I started feeling depressed, anxious and helpless (not solely because of the study, of course) and felt like I lacked the strength and resilience to face these stories, i.e., analyse them in a way that does justice to what they mean to the participants. Increasingly, the Story Houses became like a pandora's box, I feared that once I open them, they would flood me with all sorts of uncontrollable pain, suffering and uncomfortable memories, that, sometimes, felt too close to home. After a year and a half after my last interview (and after hypnotherapy to address what has become work avoidance), I felt like I had enough distance to the data and was finally able to open the lid, knowing that I was in

control of closing it again, whenever I needed. This personal experience made me wonder if participants, too, felt like they were in control of closing the lid on their Story Houses again. Laden with so much emotional intimacy, did the Story House become a Pandora's box? At the time, I trusted that participants had the sufficient care infrastructure around them to not let the Story House become a source of ongoing anxiety.

One such example is Kevin who struggled with suicidal thoughts throughout the research process. When he mentioned it for the first time – and before I could say anything about needing to tell someone (my information sheets stated that I can break confidentiality when I felt a participant is at risk of harming themselves or others) – Kevin quickly interjected ‘but I have had those [suicidal thoughts] for a long time and my doctors and mental health nurses all know about it, just had a chat with them’. I later verified this information and felt that the support infrastructure around him was suitable, and that I would not have to undertake additional safeguarding measures. On reflection, however, I might have benefitted from more professional training (I am not a psychologist but did follow a mental health first aid course) to fully de-brief participants and – literally as well as metaphorical – close the lid on both of our experiences of the research process, putting the things the research revealed back into its safe place.

4.3.6 Analysing across data

Overall, the data brought to the fore the lived experiences of participants in relation to how their mental health unfolded, what experiences they have had in the past and how they are experiencing the present. Often these experiences were related to the dichotomies identified through the method, for instance inside/outside, alone/together, safe/exposed. Initially, I struggled to find an appropriate method of analysis for the entirety of the four different types of data: visual data (pictures of Story Houses), poems, interviews, and the field notes that were taken while making the Story House and across all participants (some of which did not do an interview). First, I struggled because the literature on analysing visual data phenomenologically remains underdeveloped and so there was only limited guidance on what to actually look or feel for in the Story Houses (Bagnoli, 2009;

Boden & Eatough 2014; Cassell, Malik & Radcliffe, 2016; Rose, 2012). And second, despite my best efforts to bracket my own assumptions and immersing myself into a multi-modal dialogue, my analysis of visual data was at times incommensurable with analysis generated from other types of data.

For instance, to me, Jacob's Story House (see Figure 2) 'gave off' the feeling (see Boden & Eatough, 2014) of being sinister and almost kinky with its use of animal prints, shiny gold foil, red feathers and red pipe cleaners arranged to look like the rope of a hang man. For Jacob, as became clear in the interview, the red feathers meant luxury, the animal prints evoked a lounge feeling, and what looked like a hangman rope to me were ancient ruins that stood for symmetry and ancient wisdom. For Jacob, the Story House he made was a place of shelter, safety and order, which was important for him having escaped his life as a homeless person suffering with schizophrenia. Without the interview, without Jacob's backstory put into his own words, both in the poem and the interview, the visual data on its own might have been interpreted in a way unrecognisable to Jacob.

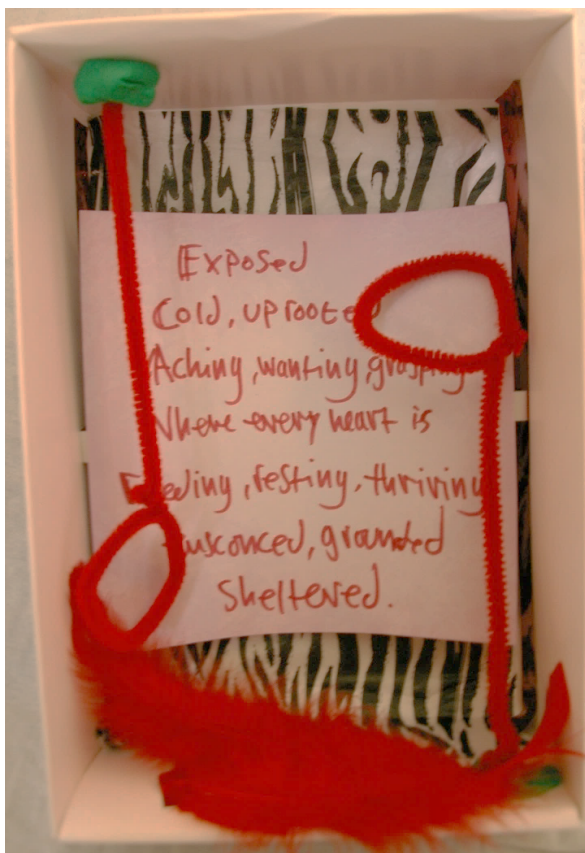


Figure 2 Jacob's Story House, view from top

Considering the above, I then opted for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as a basic and loose framework for my data analysis as this would give me enough scope to allow for plural interpretations and meanings within multi-modal data (Silverman, 2015). Thematic analysis is compatible with a variety of epistemological approaches like hermeneutic analysis (Boden & Eatough, 2014; Finlay, 2014), interpretative phenomenological analysis (Boden, Larkin & Iyer, 2019; Smith & Eatough, 2019) or even narrative analysis (Jannesari, Molyneaux & Lawrence, 2019). But wanting to stay close to a dwelling lens, my thematic analysis veered towards a more descriptive (Giorgi, 2012; Wertz, 1983, 2010) and metaphor-attuning (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008) stance.

Following Husserl ('zu den Sachen selbst'), descriptive analysis sees data as the description of a phenomenon by the experiencer; as such it is concerned with coming back to essential building blocks of meaning (meaning units), without which the overall description of the phenomenon would crumble (Finlay, 2014; Giorgi, 2012; Gill, 2014; Wertz, 1983, 2010; Willig, 2007). This seemed to fit the multi-modal and dichotic nature of my data well as it honoured the participants' own interpretation of the Story Houses but allowed it to be situated alongside and in ongoing dialogue with my own reading of the data (especially in the cases where participants were not interviewed subsequently). Across the data, but especially in the poems and choice of decorations for the Story House, the experiencer's description was often metaphorical, e.g., talking about the home as a place for safety and belonging. Throughout my thematic analysis, I therefore paid specific attention to the role of metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008; Moser, 2000; Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik & Alberts, 2006).

In practice and using NVivo11, all data were reiteratively read for reoccurring themes. At this point, I made no analytical distinction of whether the theme derived from the interview, my field notes, the poem or obvious tropes in the making of the boxes. The themes emerged out of the different data types as a total unit of meaning rather than fractured chunks of meaning. Indeed, different types of data brought out different facets of one theme and further contributed to the 'wholeness' of the data. Through further iterations, these themes became the codes for the analysis process.

As a second step, I then looked at the data and codes for each participant individually and delved deeper for meaningful relations between what they said and what they created. When reading through the texts I thus asked myself this question: ‘what matters most for this person?’ and ‘what is the essence of their experience across the different types of data?’. At the end of my analysis, I found six core themes, some of which overlapped (nature, sea and seasons for instance) but appreciated how the interpretations of these themes varied depending on the participant’s personal experiences and opposing words chosen for their poems.

4.4 Methodological implementations

4.4.1 Dwelling in the moment

The atmosphere is relaxed and friendly, some people are chatting away, drinking tea and coffee, laughing, while other are working with materials, being pensive and quiet. I feel at ease in the midst of this and observe how, slowly, everyone is starting to pick up the different materials that I brought for the Story Houses. It looks like a very intuitive process, like they just know what they want to do ... and then they go for it ... just grabbing this piece of paper or that ... cutting it into the appropriate size, taking a step back, looking at their creation ... taking another piece of material ... rearranging it ... almost absent-mindedly, as though they are in a trance, emerged in the flow of doing something ...

(Field notes, 20.09.2017)

In this observation, I reflect on the atmosphere of the Story Houses workshop while stressing the sense of ease and flow that emerges as people engage with the different making practices. One of the most remarkable things in this process was how people seem to be forgetting the world around them and were completely absorbed in the processes of making and connecting. This flow, as an immersion with the environment and a mindful attention to details in our surroundings, echoes the sentiments of a dwelling methodology. Kevin’s thoughts were wonderfully honest and self-reflective in this regard (although other participants made very similar observations):

Kevin: *The way I write was how I felt at the time. I just don't want to give too much thought away [...] no disrespect by saying that ... but we were thrown in the deep end we just had to get on and do it. So you know I've got no misgivings about that, I just did what was there at the time and I think that's probably the best way to write*

In this short reflection, Kevin gives an account of how 'being thrown in the deep end' propelled him to give rise to whatever was just on his mind, which at the time of writing were suicidal thoughts. This points to the method's potential to encourage people to bring out whatever is just on their mind in a spontaneous, non-judgmental and unmediated way. However, Kevin made it very clear that those thoughts were very much of a time and do not necessarily reflect how he was feeling a couple of weeks later, when I interviewed him, which needs to be considered as a possible limitations of this method.

4.4.2 Placing oneself – abstracting space and time

As part of the interview, I often asked people to imagine themselves 'in the box' or 'in the poem'. Even though this question seems a bit weird, all of my participants were able to answer it without much hesitation. Answers were often referring to a specific place in the box, as a metaphor for their home.

Me: *Where do you see yourself in that box?*

Daisy: *Where do I see myself in that box? On there with the cats.*

But the box also were associated with a specific time, often as synonymous with their past, as the next two excerpts show:

Me: *Where do you see yourself in the poem now?*

Claudia: *That was how I felt at the time with everything going on, now I am, I am a lot better now.*

And:

Me: *Where are you in the box?*

Laura: *I am on top looking forward, inside the box, there is my past, so I can look inside it, but not going back in ... I have to move forward!*

However, sometimes these responses were a lot more abstract and provoked the participants to talk about something very meaningful in their lives, as the case of Jacob who used to sleep rough and struggles with psychosis, who feels like hiding in his box, exemplifies:

Me: *Do you feel like you have a physical place in the box anywhere? [...]*

Jacob: *I'd be hiding over there, or lying on top there [points towards picture of a bed which he put inside Story House] [...] because that is the way that I feel, I mean in this country now ... I think a lot of people feel uprooted, I mean I don't know what country I am in anymore so I feel like hiding, there are so many pranksters around that you feel like hiding, I do, I feel like I have to be on guard sometimes.*

Overall, it became clear how the participants intimately relate to and associate with their box and poem, despite its seeming simplicity, which also becomes clear in Kevin's answer:

Me: *Do you have a physical place in that box?*

Kevin: *[pauses for some time and thinks] Honestly, it's a personal thing because even though it's very basic what I put, it is something that is very important to me because it's my memories and my childhood and even though it's not that good ... or it doesn't go into depth inside ... it's something there that is bold on the front, there it is- something personal to me.*

4.4.3 Unfolding memories

It is becoming obvious that the Story House is intimately related to its maker, and connected through space and time. However, whereas the previous examples all pointed to the participants' awareness of what the features in the Story Houses referred to or where in response to, some participants created meaning through the process of being interviewed, as can be seen in Claudia's example.

Me: *So why is this poem, in here, so neatly folded? It seems like a little secret up there?*

Claudia: *I don't know. I think sometimes it's sort of nice to have something like that, isn't it? Something that maybe that little bit more intimate ... 'welcome open' [unfolds paper, rustling sounds, see picture of Story House]. Or maybe it's a childish thing I don't know ... when I read it [the poem inside] now I find it is really upsetting. I suppose because I'm most probably thinking about Pat, my [late] husband. I don't think we always know what we write and why we write and it's only afterwards that we realise who you are writing about.*

In this example, Claudia gave a painful and intimate memory a physical form, in that she neatly folded up the poem that referred to her late husband. Anyone who is engaging with her Story House needs to actively unfold this piece of paper, but at the same time is invited to do so as she wrote 'welcome, open' on it (see Figure 3). Directing here attention towards this, she is immediately reminded of losing Pat, who she obviously loved very much, and admits that at the time of making/writing she wasn't aware that this specific memory was guiding her. Later in the interview, something else reminded her of her Pat:

"Just looking at this [window] they are looking like waves and there is something really Greek about this because Pat was really into ancient Greece, and that reminds me of a Grecian boat. I'm actually tearing up again. Because I've actually put roses inside and that is what Pat used to grow [blows nose]."



Figure 3 Claudia's Story House, view of lid

In the process of making Claudia might have just grabbed this window without thinking much about it or because she liked the colour and there were only three other designs to choose from. But in the process of engaging with its details, it was evocative of other memories and places. The sense-making of the participant's Story Houses thus emergently unfolds in the process of being interviewed and (re-) engaging with the multi-layered materiality of the Story House.

4.4.4 (Re)thinking through metaphors

However, whereas the materiality of the Story Houses has been somewhat 'static' in the previous examples, i.e., the materials and features of the story house were already decided upon by the time of the interview, the materiality of the Story Houses can also be much more fluid and be adjusted in the process of the interview as Gary's moving story shows. Gary has been feeling very lonely and has trouble engaging with people. At the same time, Gary imagines how it would be build up a friendship with people he has just met.

Gary: If I see you in the mall, I would say 'oh I know Julia'. And it's just one thing and then the conversation goes. And it's one step. And after that another one step, it's another step, and that is the building up of steps, until you can actually walk somewhere. I should put a door there, shouldn't I?

Me: Yeah you want to put a door on the there? Go ahead, draw a door on it.

Gary: [laughs] No, I'll leave it as it is.

Me: Where would you want to put the door?

Gary: Are we getting a door? Can I get a door?

Me: Yeah, of course you can have a door.

Gary: Well go on then.

Me: *[laughs]*

Gary: *[draws door] The door is slowly opening. I even put a nice little heart where I can look out of it.*

Here Gary exemplifies how engaging with the Story House method as a process can actually open up ways to think differently about one's own experiences. Reflecting on his feelings of loneliness and isolation, Gary realised that in order to interact with the world around him, he would need a door, a way to let other people in but also a way for him to get out. Immediately, this realisation was transferred into a visual metaphor that he felt inclined to express through drawing a door on his Story House during the interview. This further speaks to how the different data types cannot be regarded as separate from each other but shape each other in an intimate unity of meaning. The Story Houses can help us identify how this meaning making unfolds through different types of media in an open-ended and relational process.

4.5 Some brief findings and discussion

4.5.1 Unravelling the connection between alone and together

Silvia's Story House has two distinct worlds. On the outside (the lid), shown in Figure 4, she wrote several words relating to communication like 'email', 'telephone' and 'letters'. In her words, these words reflect the demands other people have on her. For example, friends and family want to meet up and connect, or have a meal together. The numbers stand for the fact that there are a number of people she is encountering in her social environment. This poses a number of challenges to Silvia, who tends to feel overwhelmed and anxious in the midst of these stresses.

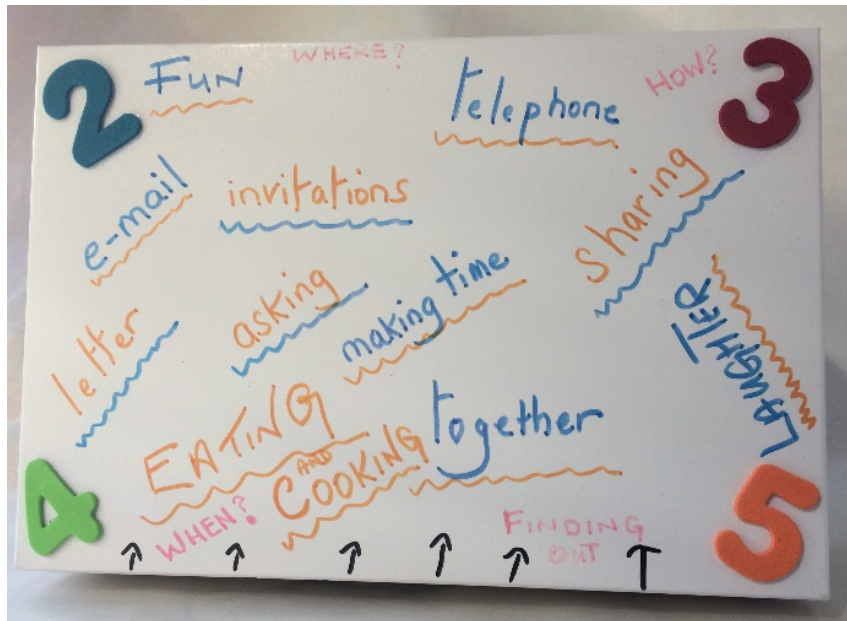


Figure 4 Claudia's Story House, view of lid



Figure 5 Silvia's Story House, view of inside

or that most participants were within a 30–45-min drive to some sort of seaside. However, I argue that the occurrence of this theme was more than just a coincidence and that these maritime imaginaries reflect an awareness of deeper contradictions within the metaphor of seas: serene yet powerful, dangerous yet beautiful. As John Mack (2011) in his book on the cultural history of the sea makes clear, the sea is an ahistorical place of mystery that has been alluded to extensively across literature, poetry and fine art from all parts of the world. People encountering the sea are often at the mercy of unpredictable forces against which a fight is almost always fruitless. Instead ‘saltwater people’, as Mack calls them, learn to live with and succumb to these forces that are necessarily outside our control. This can help people build up resilience as they learn to cope with uncertainty. This has also been reflected in the tidal movements that Anna’s and Marcus’ poem pick up as a metaphor for how her moods can go up and down:

Ebbing and Flowing

Anger and Sadness, it shows

Tidal Mood Swings

(Anna, poem)

Isolation

Balmy Trustworthy

Deactivating Sleeping Drugging

The Hermit Crab Retires. A breeze awakens

Fizzy Busy Boring

Good Strange

Company

(Marcus, poem)

In Carl Jung’s psychoanalytic dream interpretation (2014 [1968], 48), the sea stands for the collective unconscious ‘because unfathomed depths lie beneath its surface’ (ibid.). For Jung, this is evidence that there must be a deep secret that is keeping the one who longs for the sea away from their surroundings or terra firma, the solid

ground of reality (pp.48). It should be noted that I do not attempt to do a psychoanalytic reading of my data, however, the basic conceit of Jung's idea does come through in the following two examples of Marcus and Hayley.

In the following, Marcus' account is used to think more about the dualities of place through the metaphor of sea. In reference to a line in his poem Marcus says:

"So 'the hermit crab retires' is obviously living under the sea, sometimes it has to go back and it is safe down there. And it is awaiting company in the depths of the ocean. So that was the positive side of being alone or well ... being lonely ... I did blur the waters a little bit ..."

And then:

"At first you thought I put 'fuzzy' and I was going to put 'fuzzy' but I turned it into 'fizzy' because 'fizzy' is staring at the thing, you know, the bubbles of life. And again bubbles can go flat, like company could change over time. So it was the fizzing as the activity, the stirring of adrenaline, etcetera, the activating of the brain."

What this excerpt exemplifies is how Marcus describes how the things that lie deep inside sometimes bubble up and come to the surface. They blur the water, stirring things up. This makes it hard to see where the outside turns into the inside and there appears to be a fuzzy space of transition, of things changing, that seems to be very exciting and joyful for Marcus. Such fantastical transitions also take place in Hayley's imagination:

Each morning she swims out of the cove at the bottom of the sea. Her name is fair Miranda, goddess of the Cornish ocean. But sometimes she doesn't feel goddess of the ocean. She feels insecure, unsure sometimes, to venture out of her cove, some would say come out of her shell. But today she is determined to break free and see the world above the ocean.

(Hayley, poem II)

The theme of 'sea' and 'mermaids' is also reflected in her Story House, which she decorated with stickers that she brought from home. For Hayley, the choice of stickers, including the smiley faces, reflect the happy memories of her childhood, as can be seen in Figure 7 and 8.



Figure 7 Hayley's Story House, side view



Figure 8 Hayley's Story House, side view

When asking her, in the interview, to explain what she meant with the mermaid breaking free, Hayley clarifies:

“Yeah I suppose that’s me really, you know when I have felt very ... when I found it hard to go to social events or anything really. I felt too anxious and nervous but today I am determined to go, you know. Because I could feel quite overwhelmed by I suppose the world, crowds, you know.”

Hayley has always felt different from other people, because of being on the autistic spectrum. Interacting with the world around her has caused her anxiety and, in the past, she has found it very difficult to get out of her shell and expose herself to unknown situations. Part of the reason this was very difficult for her might have been that people never quite understood why she felt the way she did, as she makes clear here:

“I have met a lot of people over the years and some extended family members and family friends who haven’t understood the difficulties I have had. Because autism is a very, very complex condition and people don’t understand, don’t quite understand it. I have found a lot of insensitivity from people and it makes you very, very bitter. And she [the mermaid?] will lose hope and you lose hope, in fact. And in friendships you can’t really find people who understand who I am. It is hard to trust people because of this. So I suppose it helps me to come out of my shell”.

Again, Hayley draws a parallel between her own experiences and that of the mermaid, who become almost indistinguishable from each other the way she talks about it. ‘And she will lose hope and you lose hope in fact’, here it becomes clear that perhaps the mermaid is a device to understand and order her own experiences. Only after realising how the mermaid might have felt, Hayley notices that she actually feels the same way. Interestingly, the real and imagined experienced almost seamlessly merged and Hayley and Marcus both metamorphosed into sea creature, a mermaid and a hermit crab. This completely blurred the waters as to what is real and suggests that within spatial imaginaries, dualities can indeed become indistinguishable from each other.

In her poem, there is also an interesting duality between female empowerment, after all, she is a goddess, and insecurity. On the one hand, Hayley feels confident and accepted, on the other hand, she still struggles with low self-esteem. However,

both experiences seem to be happening underneath the surface, in the depth of the sea, similar to Marcus' account. Both also express a desire, drive or determination to break out towards the surface and expose themselves, perhaps only temporarily, to crowds and other people, despite their insensitivities. However, what also became evident is that 'under the sea' is the place where they will always return to, as this is where it is safe.

4.6 Concluding remarks

In the process of the research, participants' shared experiences became densely enmeshed in the spatial and temporal landscapes that the method helped create. These landscapes then served as a means for further collaborative exploration which helped build a shared understanding of the entangled and non-linear ways people make sense of their wellbeing. Through the study, participants shared a continuous sense of movement and mobility between two (artificially created) ends of a dichotomic relationship; often in relation to retrieval and exposure. It is in this constant back and forth – between being with people in the outside world and being with oneself in the inside; or retrieving as a hermit crab or mermaid in the depth of the sea and then bubbling and fizzing to the surface – that the possibility and direction for wellbeing emerges. If we cyclically unravel the distinction between these worlds, this can create space for new ways of being, for example, it would allow us to be well within an illness or free within an oppressive system (Dahlberg, Todres & Galvin, 2009). This directly links back to phenomenological research (Galvin & Todres, 2013) and the political importance for opening spaces for non-binary thinking in health and wellbeing research more broadly (Schickler, 2005).

Coming back to the research question: as a methodology, a dwelling lens provides a way to guide method design and implementation in a way that allows us to understand complex experiences by drawing dichotomic distinctions and then actively unravelling them to understand how experiences move between two ends of a spectrum; with its emphasis on wholeness methodological dwelling further lends itself as a tool for combining different types of data and is flexible enough to accommodate a variety of research epistemologies. As a theory, a dwelling lens

presents itself as an analytical tool to help structure and interpret data in a way that does justice to the totality of experiences. A lens that uses different creative tools to bring to the fore different facets of our existence, Story Houses can help create, open up and invite us to dwell in the non-literal, evocative and ephemeral landscapes of human existence.

Of course, like any other method, there are certain limitations to consider when adapting a dwelling lens or, more specifically, working with Story Houses. One such limitation is that we do not know what effect the time, space and artificiality of the method had on how participant shared their experiences, what type of experiences they shared and which ones they did not. A longitudinal approach to the method might be interesting in the future to reveal how dispositions might change over time. There is further potential to test the method for its therapeutic potential in future research. Moreover, the Story Houses would lend themselves to be adapted and implemented in a variety of research contexts where notions of home play a central role, for instance, research with homeless or displaced people or research with family. For the latter, the method would further lend itself for more participatory approaches, e.g., parents and children creating a Story House collaboratively.

CHAPTER 5

Dwelling activism: making the personal
political in the home

Abstract: Inspired by feminist literature on the notion of 'dwelling', this paper asks: how does the personal dimension of dwelling relate to the political discourses of housing activism, and specifically the community land trust (CLT) movement? CLTs are a form of communal housing that challenge commodifying practices of home making. The aim of this paper is to (re-)consider the political dimensions of housing activism and research through focussing on the intimate and private experiences of 'being at home', thereby extending and pluralising housing activism as 'dwelling activism'. Methodologically, this paper brings into conversation two data sets through. The first is an arts-based study on the intimate experiences of feeling at home that was conducted with 18 mental health service users in the UK. The second study interviewed 14 urban CLT activists in England about community engagement and housing activism. A plural analysis offers a symbiotic reading of the close entanglement between the inward-facing personal practices of dwelling like building shelter and security, and the outward-facing more public practices of dwelling, like building relations and togetherness.

Keywords: dwelling activism, CLT, Story Houses, dwelling, data disintegration

5.1 Introduction

Exposed

Cold, uprooted

Aching, wanting, grasping

Where every heart is

Feeling, resting, thriving

Ensconced, granted

Sheltered

(Jacob, poem)

“There is no question: it is personal. The personal is structural. I learned that you can be hit by a structure; you can be bruised by a structure.” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 30)

“I’ve been pressured to be strong, selfless, other oriented, sacrificing, and in general pretty much in control of my own life. To admit to the problems in my life is to be deemed weak [...] It is at this point a political action to tell it like it is, to say what I really believe about my life instead of what I’ve always been told to say” (Hanisch, 1969, p. 4)

In her influential essay ‘The personal is political’, second wave feminist Carol Hanisch (1969) invites women and other marginalised groups to step out of the systemically silencing shadows of exploitation, sexism, racism, violence and overall social injustice. Such everyday suffering should, according to Hanisch, no longer be understood as something we need to be strong about and get on with. It is time “to tell it like it is”. In other words, she argues personal hardship is not just a private experience that should remain ‘inside’. Instead of being uniquely individual, suffering may in fact be emblematic of larger social and political structures outside

of us. These structures hit and bruise us and, to some extent, can determine and condition how we live our lives, thus the political⁹ becomes personal.

Making sense of this, feminists stress the performative potential of healing collectively by means of speaking out and sharing stories of struggle and survival in the house and beyond. In that sense, we do not only need personal therapy nor do we need to take full blame for the situation we find ourselves in, but should also call out the powerful structures that bind us towards a certain way of living. Belief in the potential of voice and assembly, and insistence that lives of marginalised groups matter, are at the core of feminist theory (see Butler, 2015) shows how the personal may also become political. In a feminist vein, the personal and the political are not two distinct and separate realms (cf. Fraser, 1990; Mansbridge, 2017). Therefore, the private cannot be separated from the political (see also Ahmed, 2017; Cahill, 2007; Cele, 2013; Hall, 2018).

This paper builds up from this feminist understanding of how personal and political relate and applies it specifically to questions pertaining to housing and dwelling. I approach dwelling in a feminist vein (Ahmed, 2017; Long, 2013; Todres & Galvin, 2010; Young, 1997) that specifically hones in on the relational in-betweenness of notions such as inside/outside, private/public, personal/political, subject/object. Opening up an in-between space between these opposites, acknowledges that there is no hard border between they blend into each other on a spectrum, where one is already encapsulated in the other. Dwelling is where these dichotomies meet and unravel in the process of relating to oneself, others and one's (built) environment (Harrison, 2007; Heidegger, 1993 [1951]).

In doing so, this paper develops an integrative, synthetic approach towards the politics of housing through a feminist dwelling lens. The aim of this paper is to (re-)consider the political dimensions of housing activism and research through focussing on the intimate and private experiences of 'being at home', thereby extending and pluralising housing activism as dwelling activism. The research question of this paper is: how does the personal dimension of dwelling relate to the

⁹ 'Political' here is not understood in a narrow sense pertaining to party politics, for instance. In this analysis, 'political' stands for the way that power is distributed.

political discourses of housing activism, and specifically the CLT movement? I answer this question by (dis-)integrating the personal and political from their expected confined empirical setting by i) reading two heterogenous cases 'against the grain' (that is I am looking for the political in the personal, and the personal in the political) and ii) pluralising them through a feminist dwelling framework (Easterby-Smith, Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2008; Goodbody & Burns, 2011; Frost et al., 2010; Kincheloe, 2005). This is important because, usually, research on home and housing has focussed exclusively on one side of the coin at a time, looking either at the personal or the political importance of having a home. Despite a growing awareness of the entanglement between the micro and macro of home and housing research (Blunt & Sheringham, 2019), on a methodological and theoretical level, current research struggles to holistically bring together the synergetic, deep entanglement between the personal and political. This paper addresses this gap by bringing together two heterogenous cases through a dwelling lens.

The first case addresses the socio-political implications of urban housing policies in the UK, specifically looking at community land trusts (CLTs). This study encompasses 14 interviews with CLT organisers across various cities in England on housing activism and community engagement. The second case explores what home means to vulnerable and precariously housed communities in terms of their wellbeing (see Chambers et al., 2018 for a systematic review). This study comprises of an arts-based research carried out with 18 mental health service users who crafted 'Story Houses', paper boxes accompanied by poems that speak to the entangled emotional landscapes of what it means to feel and be at home (see Zielke, 2019).

I bring these two very different data sets into conversation by, first, reading housing activist data (case I) 'against the grain' in the sense that the reader may expect such data to speak to the socio-political macro-structures of housing (the grain), as most, if not all, CLT research to data does just that. However, I will be looking for the personal in these political narratives. In parallel, I use the same approach in case II, looking for the political in people's personal experiences with dwelling, namely as a way to understand to what political structures their experiences speak. As a second step, I draw out implications for analysing these two approaches together,

in parallel. The analysis provides rich insight into this discourse by developing a holistic and dialectic framework on dwelling.

Methodologically and empirically, this paper contributes to a growing body of literature that is interested in better understanding the complex relationship between community wellbeing and wider housing policies (Chambers et al., 2018). On a theoretical level, this paper makes a contribution by identifying and discussing how we may experience the personal as political in the field of geographies of dwelling (Blunt, 2005; Blunt & Sheringham, 2019; Easthope, 2013; Harrison, 2007; Long, 2013; McFarlane, 2011;) and urban housing policies (King, 2009), especially the community land trust movement.

My findings explore three directions in which the data is coming together. First, the analysis looks at inward-facing practices of dwelling and show to what extent the home can provide shelter and how experiences of dwelling are structurally affected by political precarity. Second, they will also address the outward facing practice of dwelling and discuss how dwellers relate to others in their environment and the political momentum this may build. The final section introduces the concept of dwelling activism as a way to extend, and add nuance to, our understanding of the intersection of feeling at home and housing activism. In conclusion, this paper puts forward a synthetic, integrative epistemological approach to dwelling(s) research.

5.2 Literature review: The house as a home

“In today’s housing shortage even this much is reassuring to the good: residential buildings do indeed provide lodgings; today’s houses may even be well planned, easy to keep, attractively cheap, open to air, light, and the sun, but—do the houses in themselves hold any guarantee that dwelling occurs in them?” (Heidegger, 1993 [1951], p.348)

In contrast to a house, which is merely a physical structure or source for financial investment, a home is a place “that hold[s] considerable social, psychological and emotive meaning for individuals and for groups” (Easthope, 2004, p.135) as a “series of feelings and attachments, some of which, some of the time, and in some places,

become connected to a physical structure that provides shelter” (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 10). A home goes beyond its physical or fiscal manifestation and opens up a place to unfold, to let be, to develop belonging and stable anchoring. In short, it is a place for fostering and sustaining deep relations, with oneself, with others and with the material environment (Blunt, 2005; Harrison, 2007; Massey, 1992). I therefore understand home in a relational sense, that is as a social and spatial practice of homemaking that involves ‘scaling up’ (Boccagni & Duyvendak, 2019) and spiralling out towards actors, places and practices beyond the domestic.

In this literature review on the concept of ‘home’ I will introduce two aspects of this ‘outside’ the domestic. The first part of this section looks into dwelling as a concrete site for social action and examines the CLT movement as an example of this. The second part takes a more philosophical stance of dwelling. Here dwelling is understood in a feminist vein, as the unfolding of thinking and being on the threshold of private and public life.

5.2.1 Dwelling as a concrete site for social action: community land trusts

In literature, dwelling has been mainly explored as a political force in the city. McFarlane (2011), for instance, looks at dwelling as an urban assemblage and contends that such a conceptualisation of urban life can bring a sense of imagination, movement and friction to the socio-material and power-laden structures in and of the city. I echo here a recent article on the emergent theme of home-city geographies (Blunt & Sheringham, 2019) that seeks to bring into conversation urban domesticities (home-making in the city) and domestic urbanism (the city as home): “we argue that home-city geographies encompass the material and imaginative geographies of both within an inclusive conceptual” (p.815). Such an inclusive conceptual may help recognise and attune to the potentialities and possibilities of *other* forms of labour, capital accumulation and togetherness (Blunt & Sheringham, 2019; Crabtree, 2017; McFarlane, 2011; King, 2009). As such urban dwelling may be seen as a tool for mobilising political alternatives that deepen urban democratic practices by bringing people together

that support each other in the face of social, psychological and economic hardship (Jarvis, 2019; Williams, 2018; Segal, 2017).

One example of such political alternatives is the community land trust (CLT). CLTs are non-profit, community-based organisations offering affordable housing solutions and other neighbourhood-based initiatives, like community gardens, cafes and community facilities to their members. Anyone can become a CLT member, although CLTs are usually geared towards supporting and empowering disenfranchised residents that come from low-income or marginalised communities. A community of shareholders, usually the CLT members, holds the land in trust, allowing for the legal separation of the land from the buildings on the land. By removing the land from speculative markets, CLTs are able to regulate inflation, keeping rent and selling prices at long-term sustainable rates (Bunce, 2016; DeFilippis et al., 2019; Engelsman, Rowe & Southern, 2016; Foster & Iaione, 2015; Paton, 2013; Stravides, 2016).

Through this approach, they can offer a political and economic alternative to the exploitative dynamics of the global housing markets that usually understand 'home' as an anonymised commodity, something to broker with on the stock-market as a source for overseas financial investment (Engelsman, Rowe & Southern, 2016; Harvey, 2012; Fournier, 2013; Thompson, 2015). As such, CLTs have been described as an integral part of the discourse on diverse economies and urban commons (e.g. Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2013, 2016).

Urban commons can be best understood not only as a finite pool of (public) resources, but also as a form of social organising (Fournier, 2013) – as a dialectical concept that includes both material resources and social practices and relations economies (Bollier, 2007; Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy, 2013, 2016). It is dialectical because of a critical tension between capitalist and non-capitalist forces that is continuously challenged by different points of views, needs and interests between people and their environments (Gibson Graham 2008, p. 212). As a type of urban common, the CLT movement has also been characterised as a tool for democratic, inclusive, self-sustaining and more ethical housing, where: i) housing is widely accessible, ii) its usage decided by the community, iii) its profits shared

and re-invested, iv) its community both cares for and v) is responsible for their assets (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2013, pp.131).

Overall, to date, literature on CLTs focusses mainly on the dynamics pertaining to socio-economic alternatives (DeFilippis et al., 2019; Engelsman, Rowe & Southern, 2016; Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2013), political engagement (Hodkinson, 2012), urban regeneration (Thompson, 2015) and empowerment of local communities (Bunce, 2016; DeFilippis et al., 2019). On occasion it also has had a focus on the place-based social and relational practices of common-ing, as a verb rather than a noun (Engelsman, Rowe & Southern, 2016; De Angelis, 2010, p 955; Linebaugh, 2014). However, even in these more relational accounts of the CLT literature, the focus remains on the economic, political, social or community-based macro or meso practices of home making and, to my knowledge, hardly ever considers what happens *inside* the home, on a micro level where private experiences are lived out and explored. It is here where a deeper engagement with dwelling can help to build a better understanding of how the politics of common-ing are informed by the profoundly personal and mundane practices of dwelling.

5.2.2 Dwelling as feminist critique

To dwell is to do more than just live in a house. Dwelling is a rich philosophical theory and methodology (see Zielke, 2019) that links to philosophical studies in phenomenology— the study of experiences (Heidegger, 1993 [1951]; see also Harrison, 2007; Jacobs & Smith, 2008; McFarlane, 2011). In Heideggerian terms, dwelling is the unfolding of thinking and being, a “free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence” (Heidegger 1993 [1951], p. 351). That sphere entails a letting-be-ness of the world, accepting the world as it is. Doing so, all things fall back into their natural order and we can build and experience a sense of being that is at total peace with the world, a sense of totality and completion. Becoming one with the world through dwelling might best be understood as a process of relating to the in-between spaces of one’s human and non-human environment and situating oneself comfortably amongst that in-between-ness. That in-between-ness may be one between subject and object, inside and outside, and private and public, to name

but a few dichotomies that meet and unravel in the process of dwelling (Harrison, 2007; Galvin & Todres, 2013).

In light of Heidegger's active involvement with German National Socialism, his insistence on oneness with the world has been interpreted as a problematic justification for a "totalitarian" and "tyrannical" politics (Harrison, 2007), in that it strips actors of their agency and imposes a certain unity and sameness that may lead to political quietism. In the context of home and home making, feminist scholars such as Ahmed (2015), Irigaray (1999) and Young (1997) have pointed out two main critique points. i) On a conceptual level, feminists critique Heidegger's emphasis on building and erecting by saying that these acts are classically masculine activities that come with a violent and forceful 'feel' to them. ii) On a practical level, feminists find it concerning that any domestic activity, such as making home cosy and surgically clean, is intrinsically oppressive, because it re-affirms gender and race stereotypes, like that of the stay at home mum or black housekeeper (see hooks, 2015).

Therefore, practices in and around the home can perpetuate, rather than challenge, gender and other social inequalities, and further cement the public/private divide that firmly puts the political in the realm of the public and the domestic in the realm of private (Fraser, 1990). With such a clear distinction also comes a "nostalgic longing for an impossible security and comfort, a longing brought at the expense of women and of those constructed as Others, strangers, not-home, in order to secure this fantasy of a unified identity" (Young, 1997, p. 164). A firm divide between public and private, seriously questions the possibility for human freedom, agency and political voice in the home.

What such firm divide misses, however, is that the home, however petty it may be, is already social, is already political in that it "carries a core positive meaning as the material anchor for a sense of agency" (Young, 1997, p.159). Where else can we sing from the top of our lungs? Where else can we safely explore our sexual (be)longings? Where else can we nap, sleep, rejuvenate, recover? Where else are we safe to say what we want and how we want it? The moments we can safely experiment, think otherwise, do otherwise, be ourselves from that what is expected,

is *within* the home (see Long, 2013). Unguarded by police, unjudged by the system, the home instils a sense of agential freedom, where we can safely explore our inner sensualities and come back to ‘us’ (Davidson, 2000). As a place for dwelling, the home is a realm for security and reflexivity, where habitual, ritualised practices form familiar patterns and become an articulated taskscape (Cloke and Jones, 2001, p. 652) that is “invested with meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life.” (Blunt and Varley cited in Blunt, 2005, p. 506; see also Long, 2013).

“Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers and difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become, an order that does not demand forgetting.” (hooks, 2015, p. 227)

Focussing on deconstruction and preserving (Young, 1997), feminists claim that it is from within the home that we can begin to talk about the political, where we start tracing out the ruses of our inequality-ridden environments, where sources of health become apparent and sources of illness can be called out. By blurring the distinction of private and public, personal and political (cf. Fraser, 1985, 1990) in the context of home we can start connecting dwelling to the politics of housing and community wellbeing. This poses a methodological challenge, however, as will become clear in the next section.

5.3 Plural methodologies

In this paper I “throw together” (Massey, 2005) two heterogenous data sets using two different methods: a series of interviews with 14 community land trust organisers as well as a study with 18 mental health service users exploring an arts-based method referred to as ‘Story Houses’. This paper integrates both data sets under a plural methodological framework. Plural methodologies are a well-established field within qualitative methods (see Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Easterby-Smith, Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2008; Frost et al., 2010; Goodbody & Burns, 2011; Kincheloe, 2005) and often include the mixing of different types of methods,

datasets, cases and techniques for analysis (Bazeley and Kemp, 2012; Mason, 2006). But the term ‘plural’, as used here, is also meant as a nod towards feminist methodologies and epistemologies (Mol, 2002; Thompson, Rickett & Day, 2018) that acknowledge the plurality of voices across multiple bodies of knowers and knowledge (Harding & Norberg, 2005).

According to Fieldings (2012, p. 125) there are three main reasons why such a plural approach to research may be preferable over single approaches:

- i) *Triangulation of data*: One of the most cited concepts, in regard to plural methodologies, is triangulation, which goes back to a more positivist tradition of establishing validity for different research methods, as well as comparing ‘uncontaminated’ research methods (Bazeley & Kemp, 2012, p. 61). Denzin (1970) populated the term triangulation and later clarified that triangulation is not necessarily about making findings more valid but about giving a fuller and more enhanced picture of a research problem (in Bazeley & Kemp, 2012, p. 61).
- ii) *Richer analysis*: This states that weaknesses and strengths of different methods can actually compensate for each other and lead to more robust conclusions. This is because approaching one issue from many angles may yield an overall richer analysis (Bazeley and Kemp, 2012, p. 56).
- iii) *Holding tensions*: Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 173), when talking about cross-case comparison, note the importance of inviting and coming to terms with the tension between the particular and the generalizable in order to deepen understanding and explanation of the social phenomena under investigation.

In the following, I describe both cases, their context and methodology.

5.3.1 Case I: Semi-structured interviews with urban CLT community organisers

Context

A project entitled ‘Urban Futures’, led by Alan Southern, looked into the phenomenon of urban CLTs. We identified nineteen urban CLTs in the UK which

we then contacted through the National CLT Network. In addition, where appropriate, personal emails were sent through contacts of the research team. Fourteen of the nineteen urban CLTs agreed to take part in the research project. I then personally visited and interviewed these fourteen CLTs between May and December 2016.

Data collection and analysis

Semi-structured interviews (Mason, 2017; Silverman, 2015) were between 30 and 120 minutes long and followed a loose interview script that broadly covered housing activism and community wellbeing. However, all interviews allowed for a degree of variance as circumstances were dependent upon location, time of interview and type of interviewee. Some interviews therefore naturally diverged from the interview script and took on a more narrative character (Mason, 2017). All interview data was professionally transcribed, although I utilised the audio recordings of the interviews, in some cases, to refamiliarise myself with the tone and feeling of the data and adding this information to my personal notes and adding further personal notes to the transcript. In addition to the transcripts and recordings, field notes were taken. Ethics approval was attained through the University of Liverpool Ethics board with Alan Southern as principal investigator. All data was coded and analysed using NVivo 10 (and later NVivo11) following principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2014). Participants are referred to as community organisers with the name of the respective city they are active in. This is because, at the time of the interview, various participants were not a part of a fully-fledged CLT and, in some cases, later decided to not continue with the legal structures of CLTs. However, each participant was part of an active organisation that was strongly sympathetic to the philosophy of CLTs (hence why they were registered on the national CLT network) and actively battled with the socio-political implications of what it means to organise community-led social housing.

5.3.2 Case II: Story Houses

Context

‘Story Houses’ are a multi-modal research method that combine guided poem writing with the decoration of the box using various materials—the Story House—and interviewing participants afterward about their creations (Zielke, 2019). Arts-based methods like poem writing can offer “engaging, memorable insight into the uniquely individual, complex and idiosyncratic experiences” (Miller 2018, p. 8; see also Bagnoli, 2009, Magrane, 2015). By artificially creating and then unravelling dichotomies broadly relating to the metaphorical sense of dwelling, for instance inside/outside or alone/together, Story Houses aim to capture the totality of lived experiences and are a suitable method for exploring the complexly unfolding emotional landscapes of vulnerable participants (Zielke, 2019). The data at hand focuses around themes of becoming well in the face of adversity and what it means to feel, and be at home with oneself.

Data collection and analysis

A study with 18 mental health service users across the North West of England was conducted between July and November 2017. The Story Houses yielded interesting findings in regard to how one makes sense of one’s past, how one opens up about personal hardship when given a safe environment, and the ways in which one can explore the fantastical worlds of what happens in the depth of a metaphorical sea and ‘underneath one’s surface’ (see Zielke, 2019). Ethical approval was granted through the University of Liverpool Ethics Board. All interviews were transcribed by me, and data was coded and analysed using NVivo 11 following principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2014). The analysis further engaged with the descriptive-phenomenological methodological underpinnings of the research study that looked for a sense of ‘essence’ across the different types of data (cf. Boden and Eatough 2014; Finlay, 2012; Giorgi, 2012; Wertz 1983). In addition, I paid attention to different metaphorical imagery that laced the different accounts around the theme of home (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008).

5.3.3 (Dis-)integration data through dwelling

Data integration is a central concept in plural methodologies and refers to the idea of bringing into conversation diverse methods, data sets or cases, by identifying similar or overlapping themes across multiple modes of analysis, and then critically comparing and contrasting them to one another (Bazeley & Kemp, 2009; Kara, 2015, p. 112). Unlike data synthesis, for instance, data integration actively seeks for tensions and incongruences between different types of data (Bazeley & Kemp, 2009) and thus makes room for accommodating the ‘messiness of interaction’ (Askins & Pain, 2011), urban ‘disorder’ (Sennett, 1996 [1974]), and a sense of ‘throwntogetherness’ (Heidegger, 1962; Massey, 2005) all of which pertain to existential questions of living together, relating and belonging in space.

When trying to find the right way to present the findings, many times, I struggled with my analysis feeling too one-dimensional, while, in other moments, it seemed overwhelmingly complex. Case I sometimes felt like it was simply providing some depth to Case II, and vice versa. It was not clear at many points where my departure point was and where exactly I was heading. To address these struggles, a feminist dwelling lens invites us to stay in-between, lean back and forth, sway left and right, but never succumb to either end of a dichotomous spectrum; to never just look for the private or just the political, but always find one within the other. Within that movement, we become one with our environment while, at the same time, making room for analytical plurality; to become one in many and many in one (Dahlberg, Todres and Galvin, 2009).

As both of my data sets were coded and analysed through NVivo 11, I could easily identify family resemblances across them, specifically around the theme of dwelling and home. The two data sets tackle this theme from very different perspectives and therefore allow a multi-perspectival view towards this complex theme that, by nature, spans different levels of analysis. As such the integrated analysis offers a symbiotic reading of the close entanglement between the micro and macro practices of home. Brought into conversation, they open up an uneven but deep discourse on the practices of being at home.

In the analysis, I refer to the Story House participants with anonymised first names, and the CLT community organisers with the names of their cities, and where appropriate, their respective CLTs. To do justice to the idiosyncrasy of individual experiences the findings also show different vignettes that illustrate more specifically an individual's idiosyncratic and intimate experience with home.

5.4 Findings and discussion: building (a) home

5.4.1 Towards insides: building home as a safe place

This first finding section considers what it means to build and dwell. Specifically, I am concerned with what the physical, socio-economic and political manifestation of home ownership feels like, which I will later explore through the two vignettes of Jacob. Before going deeper into the idiosyncratic complexities of Jacob's experiences with homelessness, this first section contextualises how people *relate* to the house they call their own and the implications of that relationship in terms of security, belonging and personal growth by looking deeper at Patrick's example.

“My home is my castle”: unfolding security and wellbeing at the intersection of people and place

“We’re all living in these homes and we want to make sure that they’re secure, that they’re looked after properly, and we want to protect them” (CLT organiser in London, West Ken Gibbs Green)

Castle

Home safe

Relaxing sleeping doing

Security

Comfort

Place learn listen

Learning giving

Sanity wellness

(Patrick, poem)



Figure 9 Patrick, Story House, view of lid and inside

The notion of protection and security has been central in participants' account of home making and home building. It is described as a place to be "looked after properly"; a castle of sorts, as becomes clear in Patrick's poem and Story House. In his interview, Patrick further draws a clear analogy between himself and his home, when he suggested that *his home really is his castle* and that that is very much who he *is* as a person. Patrick further explores the notion of safety through his two-fold choice of bricks, drawn in orange pen, and Zebra print. Bricks, as both metaphorical and literal building blocks, stand for the strong and durable components necessary to build a stable place where one can learn, listen and care for oneself and others. For Patrick this is essential for his comfort and wellness.

Other Story House participants, too, developed a strong attachment to their house and felt it was deeply reflective of who they are and where they come from:

“Honestly, it's a personal thing because even though it [the Story House and home] is very basic what I put, it is something that is very important to me because it's my memories and my childhood” (Kevin)

Home is about the people that live in it, their memories, stories and dispositions. This credo is also central in the accounts of CLT organisers, who, in different ways, stress the strong, inseparable connection between people and their home:

“It [building homes] has got to be recognisably about the people that are involved, yes, and there has to be a distinct ethos, flavour about it. So, everything was based on benefiting the people who lived there. Therefore, they became part of the plan because it was all for them.” (CLT organiser from London, Camley)

“Housing and land are the fundamentals that affect the wellbeing of every person's life and if you haven't got a decent home with room to swing a cat and your kids to do their homework, [...] cook a proper meal, have the grandparents 'round” (CLT organiser in Brighton)

This shows how home is a reflection of the person that lives in it and points towards a deep entanglement between people and places, where one constitutes and enables the other. More concretely, a home is a place for shelter, protection and security that provides enough “room to swing a cat” and participate in practices of dwelling, home-making and family building. It is within this entanglement, at the intersection between people and place, where practices and states of comfort, sanity, wellness and wellbeing are enabled and unfolded. This intersection will be further explored in the next sub-section that explores Jacob's idiosyncratic experiences of finding and building home.

Jacob I: a modern way to think, transitioning from homelessness

Jacob is 45 years old and struck me as an incredibly bright, resourceful and alert man despite having been diagnosed with schizophrenia and now on strong medication to help him cope. Jacob recently moved into his own home but has been living on the streets for an undisclosed period of time. On the day I met him at the mental health centre he was regularly visiting, and where I recruited him and other

participants, his mannerisms were hectic. In fact, parts of the interview were almost impossible to transcribe because of how fast he spoke. Our interview was guided by questions of what home meant for Jacob. Reflecting on Jacob's experience with homelessness and the processes of building a Story House a few days before the interview, Jacob recounts:

There are times when I have been living in really bad places, and wanted to get out, or living in the worst parts of town and wanting to get out. From going from living in a hostile environment and wanting to live in a better environment, that is what I have had in my mind when I did that [the Story House]. (Jacob)

In this account, Jacob is describing a transition from a life in “really bad places” (referencing here perhaps his history with drugs, delusional thoughts and rough sleeping) towards a life in a better environment, his home. That transitional movement from homelessness to home also features centrally in Jacob's diamante-poem (a type of guided poetry that I introduced the participants to as part of the Story House workshop (see Zielke, 2019)):

Exposed

Cold, uprooted

Aching, wanting, grasping

Where every heart is

Feeling, resting, thriving

Ensconced, granted

Sheltered

In these lines, Jacob hints towards several deeply emotional and existential facets of his experiences with finding home. His life on the streets left him feeling exposed and cold (in both a literal and metaphorical sense) without any roots, aching for something else. That something else is a place of shelter in which he can rest, thrive and feel. His choice of the word ‘ensconced’ is particularly attention grabbing and points towards a feeling of being protected, of becoming sedentary and homely. The word ‘granted’ implies how housing is a privilege for him that was quite literally

granted to him by an administrator in the local Council. As is the style of a diamante poem, the two parts of the poem 'meet' in the middle with the line 'where every heart is'. Jacob may be alluding to the phrase 'home is where the heart is'. But, he might also be using the word 'heart' to point towards a deeply human and emotional dimension of the home, evoking a sense of love and hope. The heart also featured as a visual trope in his Story House as the figure below show.



Figure 10 Jacob, Story House, view of lid

On the lid of his Story House, Jacob drew an intricately decorated heart. In his account, this outside of the Story House is synonymous with the outside of himself as he is “wearing [his] heart on [his] sleeve”. But he also drew the number 13 and the ace of spades, explaining that these are references to tattoos he has and are representative of the “tough guy” exterior that he wants to keep up in order to survive “down on the street level”.

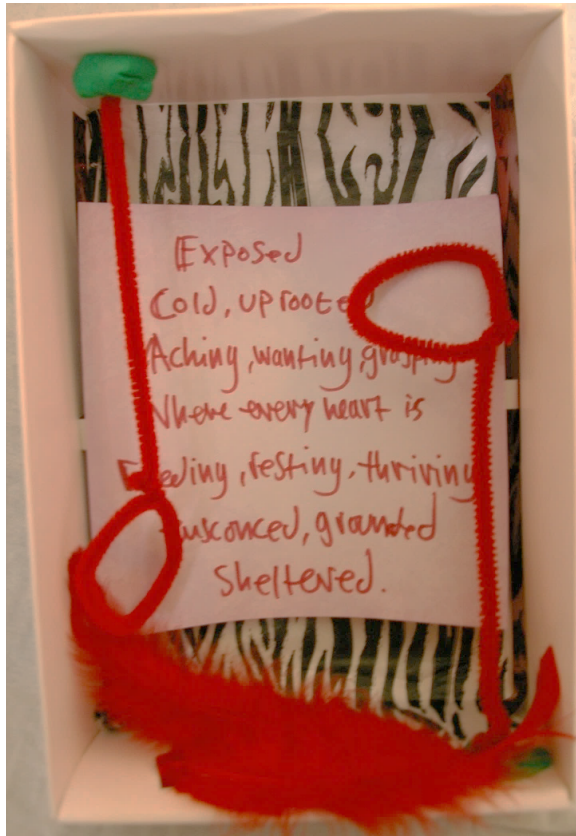


Figure 11 Jacob, Story House, view of inside

The inside of his Story House (see above figure), however, seems to stand for a more homely and intimate version of who and where he is:

“The two pipe cleaners are ancient Anglo-Saxon runes and they are a female manifestation of some sort [...] And the animal print and that feel about it, I just wanted to get that ‘back home’ feel about it and that novelty feel, like a cocktail lounge, kind of?”

Here Jacob explains his choice of material in the Story House, that included gold foil, red pipe cleaners, zebra print and red feathers, that evoked a certain feeling of luxurious home in him:

“A sense of that home environment, a luxury environment but possibly where someone has a feathery nest [...] maybe the inside of it [the Story House] is like a posher version of other things, a more modern way to think.”

Jacob closely coupled the idea of home with a sense of luxury, novelty and poshness. Interestingly, this way of living did not only represent a different way of dwelling to him. A “luxury environment” gives way to “a more modern way to *think*”. Given his later explanations around themes of political uncertainty (to which I shall return later) it is not unreasonable to assume that ‘more modern’ ways of thinking is meant in at least two senses:

In a political sense, Jacob’s Story House may represent a more just, democratic and inclusive way of allocating high-quality (luxurious) housing resources to people with housing needs.

In a socio-cultural sense, “modern ways of thinking” may also symbolize a certain type of cultural capital, a way to show belonging to a certain social class that can afford luxurious, posh lounges and cocktail bars. As such, his home may also allude to a sense of socio-economic striving, or as a vehicle for social mobility. Jacob’s account of home is deeply layered with his personal history, his changing socio-economic status and the affordance to put down his hard exterior ‘tough guy’ mask that left him wanting and aching. All of these are connected to a newly found feeling of being able to rest, preserve and persevere in a place that we feel secure in.

Jacob II: longing for protection

Jacob: I think a lot of people feel uprooted, I mean I don’t know what country I am in anymore. So I feel like hiding. There are so many pranksters around that you feel like hiding...it’s the end of this country [...] I am just on guard all the time so....

Me: And what would happen if you let that guard down?

Jacob: Well I’ve seen it happen, you get evicted by these people. They are all at each other’s throats now, I mean coming out of Europe, I didn’t agree with them, I wanted to stay as part of Europe. What they have done has gone deep into the nation’s psyche.

In this interview excerpt, from a year after the Brexit vote, Jacob draws a direct parallel between the political climate in Great Britain and his home. In his poem, Jacob already talked about feeling exposed and uprooted as though a stable anchoring has been taken away from him. That stable anchoring is his home, a

place to put down roots, where one does not have to hide and be on guard. However, in the current political climate where everyone is at each other's throat it is almost impossible to let one's guard down. According to Jacob, a moment of being oneself and letting his guard down might mean that he will get evicted from his home and has to sleep on the streets again.

It is interesting to note that Jacob almost seamlessly went from talking about being evicted to how Brexit has gone into the nation's psyche, how it has gotten under people's skin. Dwelling is therefore not just affected by political structures pertaining to housing policies, but dwelling is affected by much wider political discourses, like the question of whether or not to stay in the European Union. Jacob's example shows how this kind of uncertainty and societal rift permeates deep into the fabric of home making. This is also illustrated in an earlier interview excerpt, where Jacob describes how he relates to his Story House:

Me: Where would you be in the house?

Jacob: Where would I be? I'd be hiding over there behind the feathers or lying on top of them... it is the kind of toughness on the outside and then something slightly sexual inside [referring to Story House]. But that is all very guarded.

Me: Why is that? What do the feathers mean then?

Jacob: Well, there are means of flight in one way, but there is also a kind of pleasure and sexuality for the home environment and that is the way that I feel.

Here Jacob goes on to explain what it feels like to have to be on guard in the home, what it is like to not be able to dwell. Specifically, he describes a longing to engage with the feathery, luxurious element of his home that offers something "slightly sexual", a place to be safe and intimate. But the sexuality of the home might also refer to the reproductive elements of home, as a place to build a family (see also the account of the CLT organiser in Brighton earlier). The element of the feather seems to also be slightly tantalising, something that is right in front of Jacob but that he cannot quite reach; he can only hide behind it for now.

At the moment, Jacob seems to be caught in between two forces: on the one hand there is the political uncertainty, austerity politics and perhaps his own past, and on the other hand stands a deep vulnerability that is safeguarded and sheltered in a place of stability. Jacob's actual house might not be a home yet, but his intense and continuous longing towards another way of thinking and being exemplifies his tenacity and strength. He is persisting and continues to strive, despite being on very strong anti-psychotic drugs, despite a history of drug abuse and despite ongoing economic hardship. This is where the energetic, persevering potential of dwelling lies.

Reflective intermission

Throughout the different accounts in this first section, a clear narrative of home as a place for refuge, protection, and thriving develops. It would be easy to conclude here by stressing the importance of being able to build a home of one's own in order to be and become well. However, within the analysis, another undercurrent of themes and tropes start to emerge, namely that of safety, domesticity, family, femininity and sexuality that all point towards the reproductive forces at stake *inside* the home. Under a feminist gaze (hooks, 2015; Young, 1997), however, a sole focus on these private, inside aspects of home become rather problematic. For example, Jacob's longing for modernity, luxury and sensuality, while legitimate in and of itself, could also be understood as a nostalgic longing for a gendered home. And Jacob's desire to hide from political precarity inside his home could also be read as a practice of defeat, isolation and political quietism. We could ask at this point if home, understood as a castle, a hiding place, a sensual inside, might not mean that the voices inside that home, behind these walls that provide shelter from the outside, become inaudible. This muting of voices would mean that they can no longer offer a counter-narrative to (public) political discourse, and it could be asked whether that would mean that dwellers like Jacob are apolitical. While the inside of the home can certainly build a sense of wellbeing and security that can, arguably, help people to find the energy to, for example, volunteer in the community, it seems as though we also need to look outside the home in order to holistically understand the political potential of dwelling. In the words of bell hooks (2015):

“When we renew our concern with homeplace, we can address political issues that most affect our daily lives. Calling attention to the skills and resources of black women who may have begun to feel that they have no meaningful contribution to make, women who may or may not be formally educated but who have essential wisdom to share, who have practical experience that is the breeding ground for all useful theory, we may begin to bond with one another in ways that renew our solidarity”. (p. 87)

Reading ‘black women’ here as an extension to include all other precariously housed marginalised communities, the next section therefore looks more closely at the practical wisdom of housing activists and the types of solidarity they build through dwelling.

5.4.2 Towards outsides: Building home as place of togetherness, perseverance, solidarity and recognition

Whereas the first finding section looked into the personal, individual and inward-facing practices of home making inside the home, this section is more interested in the social, outward-facing practices of dwelling that go outside of and beyond the physical manifestation of home.

Being seen and heard

The other day walking along for the newspaper, I came upon a snail walking across the pavement. I stopped in my tracks, intrigued by it. For the first time, I solely concentrated on this wondrous creature, I observed his slow speed along the pavement. The colours on his shell, black stripes standing out of a dark grey green background. Wondering to myself whether I should pick him up and safely place him on someone’s lawn nearby... (Hayley, poem III)

“We had one of those basket things with brown leaves and I said to my mate ‘we should change them around here, you will see’. So the woman at the top of me, she had a nice top hanging basket. I took that one and I took the other one there. And I put his in mine. Nobody knew nothing. When she opens her door, it is there, hanging. But when I say ‘do you notice a change around

here?’ I told my mate and he said ‘you shady’ [...] I like that - keeps them on their toes.” (Patrick)

In the above two examples, Hayley and Patrick share two detailed accounts of how they are linking and relating their physical environment (snails and flower baskets) with their social surroundings (the neighbour’s lawn and mates). Hayley, a young woman on the autism spectrum, struggling with depression and living with her mum, is describing the ‘more than human’ (Whatmore, 2006) practices of mindfully attuning to the details of her natural and built environment by finding a sense of empathy and connection with the snail and its different lifeworld. Patrick, an elderly man struggling with loneliness, is explaining how he lightens up his neighbourhood by mischievously swapping hanging baskets, creating a sense of playfulness, curiosity and connection with his physical surrounding and other neighbours. That sense of attuning towards a light-hearted, everyday neighbourly connectivity is also crucial in the CLT movement:

“I think it is much more valuable for people to discover the things that are going on in their community and local area as part of their daily lives... just converse with people, just prompt discussion and ask questions of the people...that has happened completely organically by them being involved in the space [here, specifically a community café] and being involved as a coffee drinker” (CLT organiser in Plymouth)

It is worth saying here that Plymouth CLT, much like Homebaked CLT in Liverpool, focus the majority of their CLT community activities around a community café, that is run as social enterprise and generates income to support their CLT. The café, however, is very much part of the dwelling experience, as a type of extended, communal living room that make a variety of neighbours feel homely, welcomed and involved. When I was interviewing Homebaked CLT, seated in their community run bakery and community café, the interviewee added:

“There are so many levels of involvement... like these people [points towards a group of builders who sat next to us] are involved; they sit there and have their coffee see what I mean...for me that’s enough involvement”

Whether it is swapping flower baskets or frequenting a neighbourhood community café, involvement and connection may happen on a variety of levels and may be much smaller and quieter moments than expected when we hear the words ‘community engagement’. The interviewee from Homebaked further contextualised what it means to engage disenfranchised communities:

“You’re in an area where people’s hopes have been constantly risen and then smashed over and over. [But] there are one many people that feel for you or they feel with you because they have the same situation [...] It has to do with solidarity. So it has to do with realising you’re not the only that you’re not isolated [...] For a while what was really important was to bring people here to hear that story”

And another CLT organiser from London adding:

“If you feel it’s just you, you’re not going to do it alone...It’s just your feeling with your sisters, you know, they totally understand where you’re coming from.” (CLT organiser from London, Rooms of Our Own).

What emerges here are two things: visibility as well as solidarity. Given the fact that the majority of interviewed CLTs are situated in low-income, marginalised communities that are faced with issues such as loneliness and social isolation, not feeling alone seems to be key in forming bonds of solidarity. Hayley’s and Patrick’s accounts, despite being very personal and minor, still points towards a certain way of attuning to, and making visible, what otherwise goes unnoticed in neighbourhoods. They are playfully changing the spatial constellations around them, defying expectations of who is present, seen and engaged in a space. Hayley’s story, specifically, points towards how spaces can become engaging towards (neurologically) diverse experiences, although, unfortunately, this cannot be explored in sufficient depth here.

This section further explored what it means to foster a home environment that allows people to share an activity, like drinking a cup of coffee in the same physical space. Here, too, there seems to be an emerging and newly found sense of relational and social reshuffling, of bringing people from a community with low social and

economic capital into a space that was previously unpopulated, letting them emerge as political subjects from decades of systematic silencing. This is done by prompting discussions and making audible and visible ‘that story’ of people’s personal hardship, turning it instead into a story of solidarity and belonging, a story of being with one’s ‘sisters’ (or any other marginalised group of people).

Generating energy and persevering

This next section now looks into how to galvanise political action from solidarity through connecting to others. What is it about coming together in a place and dwelling collectively over a shared activity that creates political momentum in housing activism? There seems to be a movement towards the outside, towards others and towards change that is expressed in Marcus, a mental health service user and Story House participant:

Dwelling

Safe Peaceful

Loving Accepting Shielding

My Comfort Blanket. Kaleidoscopic Joy Ride

Exciting Challenging Wild

Society

(Marcus, poem II)

In my talks with Marcus, he further contextualised his poem and revealed that he has spent a long time trying to accept and love himself for who he is. This has been difficult both because of his history with delusional thoughts as well as a difficult relationship with his parents. But, he is now in a place where he feels stable and looks at his home as a type of comfort blanket that gives him safety and peace. Within that safe place, Marcus has spent the majority of his time with only himself. He describes how he used to “just talk, and talk, and talk, and do plays” with himself because, in his words “I can trust myself”. But then, upon recognizing that “isolation is a drug” to him:

“I learnt not to talk to myself, I realised that the energy needed to be expressed in the community and it's challenging... I don't think it's right to be a cave dweller”

The energy that Marcus is referring to is also present in his poem where he links community and society with a kaleidoscopic joy ride, something very energetic, colourful and exhilarating. What exactly that outward propelling energy is and where it comes from is not entirely clear in Marcus' account, but other housing activists, too, identify that surge to step out as a type of positive force:

"It happens, you do it by making things happen by saying 'yes!', you know 'we can do things, we can make things happen' [...] I think it's quite addictive actually" (CLT organiser in Bristol)

The sense of movement forward is also expressed in other accounts that stress the importance of continuity and persevering:

"[...It's like] Sisyphus pushing the boulder up the mountain... [We] often felt like we're the sort of old biddies that aren't being listened to. But you just have to sort of persevere... There's got to be continuity. One of the difficulties is the nature of volunteering and that people come and go, except where we're able to provide self-contained housing where people feel then that they can put down roots and have families and all the rest of it" (CLT organiser in Brighton)

"We learn within the process how to be resilient, how to think" (CLT organizer in Liverpool, Homebaked)

From the above accounts, it becomes clear that political action arises out of dwelling as a process. That is people are only able to be an active in their community if they have a safe place to return to, somewhere that provides safety and continuity, where one does not have to live in fear of being evicted any minute, as was the case with Jacob in an earlier example. Activity arises out of passivity and continuously propels one forward, even though that process might be strenuous and Sisyphean.

5.4.3 Dwelling activism

From moving from passive to active and considering both the inward-facing as well as outwards-facing practices of dwelling, the question of what these processes of

housing activism *really* are, arises. Before going out and interviewing the various CLT organisers, the research team and I were mainly interested in housing activism in the CLT movement. So naturally, the language in our information sheets and interview questions reflected this interest. For example, I would often ask participants how they became an activist or what type of activism they do. Interestingly, through this use of terminology, we found a number of the participants felt very uncomfortable referring to what they do as activism:

“We wouldn’t call it activism [...] It’s empowering the people to help them understand the systems that are binding them” (CLT organizer in London, East London)

“It was built really on the work that a lot of the local residents had been doing already through painting the buildings and doing the gardening - an activism that wasn’t just about standing in front of bulldozers. It was about doing something positive to show that there was an alternative”. (CLT organizer in Liverpool, Granby)

This finding is in line with the rest of the analysis that stresses the central role of the intimate, minor, relational micro-processes of dwelling that are key to going outward and becoming visible and active in a local community, often in ways that might look ‘apolitical’ (see Jacob). Dwelling activism is therefore not about standing in front of bulldozers, but about engaging communities by building and fostering relations, empowering people to help them understand the systems that are binding them.

Given the intimate and complex dimensions of dwelling that have been explored in the first finding, and the relational, outward facing practices of dwelling explored in the second finding, it becomes clear in order to understand the politics of dwelling, a definition of dwelling activism must include the *whole* experiences of what it means to dwell. That means dwelling activism cannot only be understood as loud and radical collective action, but it must also take into consideration the notions of personal struggle one can experience when building shelter and trying to belong in precarious communities. We should therefore widen our

understanding of dwelling activism to encompass these quieter, inward-facing practices of thinking, understanding and togetherness.

If CLTs were to be understood as dwelling activism, then that would also generally change the nature and purpose of ‘successful’ housing activism, as this participant from Homebaked CLT in Liverpool makes clear:

“I think even if we even if Homebaked closes tomorrow, never got any housing and it would break my heart and it would be horrible for everyone involved, but we are still successful... that goal orientated thinking [...is...] a very ingrained capitalistic characteristic...productivity for productivity’s sake... But maybe sometimes the most radical thing is to sit down and not do anything...to put everything down and say ‘you know what...’”

Striving inwards (towards shelter) or outwards (towards community) might also mean striving towards a specific goal, like having a ‘modern and luxurious’ house of one’s own or building a community-led alternative to investor-led housing developments. However, whether or not that goal is attainable or realistic may not be crucial in deciding whether dwelling activism is politically valuable as such. The ‘success’ of dwelling activism is independent from the actual physical houses being built. Dwelling activism is not about coming to conclusions, but about keeping tensions and conversations between different forces alive: the past and the future, the actual and the possible, the inside and the outside, the local and the global, the personal and political. Persisting in the limbo of these agonistic forces is exactly what it means to dwell and it is here where people find new energy to discover political alternatives.

5.5 Conclusion: towards a dwelling activism

This paper asked the question of how we may conceptualise CLT housing activism when implicating the personal experiences and micro-structures of dwelling by employing a (dis-) integrating feminist dwelling lens that ‘threw together’ two heterogenous data sets, each one speaking to a different dimension of dwelling. The first finding discussed what it means to relate to one’s home as an extension of self, stressing notions of security and shelter. Jacob’s story developed a deeply intimate

reading of how dwelling offers a different, “more modern” way to think and, therefore, can be a vehicle for social mobility. His struggle with homelessness and political precarity after Brexit further showed how his personal home is affected by political structures and social inequalities. It is here where the personal became political for Jacob and other dwellers.

After problematising a sole focus on the insides of home through a feminist dwelling lens, the second set of findings looked at dwelling as an outward facing practice. Here the analysis focussed on practices of attuning and relating to one’s built and social environment and building perseverance and continuity that fosters an energy towards thinking through and building political alternatives. The final section then looked into what housing activism might look like when considering public as well as the private, on the inside as well as the outside. I introduce the term *dwelling activism* to understand the holistic and complex practices between the personal and political dimensions of home, where one is encapsulated in the other, like two Russian dolls made from the same wood. Neither, the personal nor the political is absolute as the personal is already political and the political always already personal.

The below figure sums up the conceptual contribution of this paper: the top box exemplifies the socio-political macro structures of dwelling that were important for interviewees in case study I: how investor-led housing drains money from local communities and only produces impersonal houses, rather than actual homes, for instance (Bunce, 2016; DeFilippis et al., 2019; Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2013). The bottom box stands for the personal experiences with dwelling, the way it provides shelter and room to grow a family (Blunt, 2005; Long, 2007). However, throughout the analysis that read both cases ‘against the grain’, these two dimensions became increasingly blurred and interconnected. We saw the personal as political and the political as personal. The arrows pointing up and down stand for the energetic movement and unravelling between these two seeming dichotomies. I am calling the in between space between the political and personal of dwelling, dwelling activism. It is a form of activism because it generates a certain type of energy that propels new forms of thinking, building and dwelling without

needing to stand in front out bulldozers; it is instead a type of activism that gently turns outwards towards others.

Turning outwards by relating and connecting to the other is a way of offering alternatives to capitalist growth fantasies traditionally engrained in housing markets, but also speaks to the perseverance, care and strength nascent in local communities. Showing that things *can* be different, the arrows pointing to the left and right are pushing open new spaces for local action and flourishing; expanding the realm of what is possible and making space for people to be seen and heard.

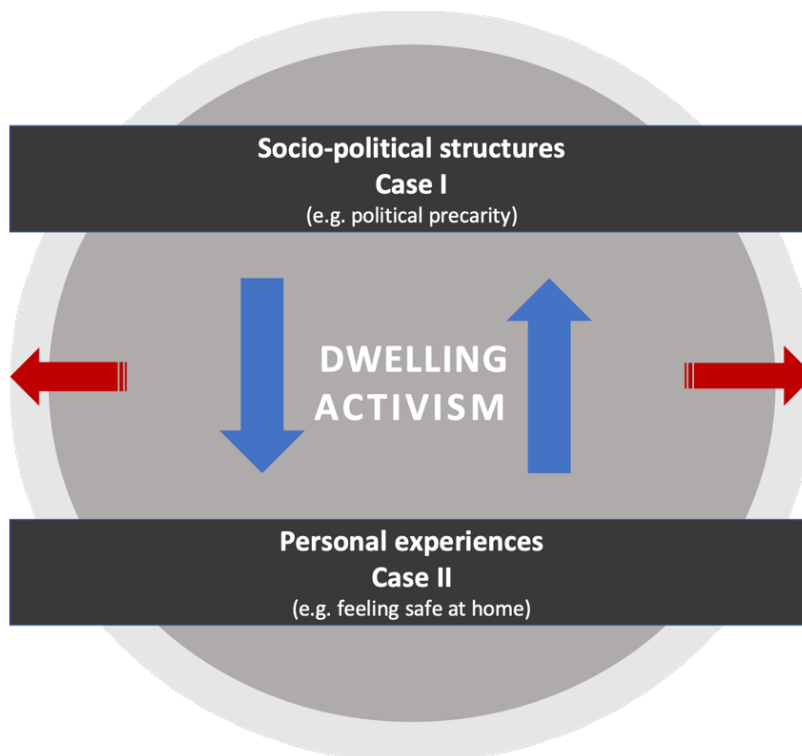


Figure 12 Dwelling activism diagramme

Future research needs to further explore and mobilise the emancipatory potential of bringing the underexplored intersection between personal hardship and political precarity *together and in parallel* and analyse, through (dis-)integration, how both unravel and meet in the (built) environment. We must accommodate for this encapsulating complexity of dwelling, and battle with new methodological, epistemological and theoretical approaches to further explore the relation and interconnectedness between the personal and political of home making and explore new directions and possibilities of urban living, housing policies and the

CLT movement(Blunt & Sheringham, 2019; Jarvis, 2019; McFarlane, 2011; King, 2009). This paper puts forward dwelling activism as a powerful tool to do just that.

CHAPTER 6

Reflections and conclusions

Bringing back the three research questions that structured this thesis, I first reiterate the contributions of this thesis. I then draw out implications for policy and practice. Finally, this chapter reflects on the future of wellbeing research and points towards ways to build more equitable futures.

6.1 Reviewing literature and answering research questions

The the literature review I have presented a number of influential approaches in wellbeing research, including studies in subjective wellbeing (Diener & Lucas, 1999; White, 2010), psychological wellbeing (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) and positive psychology (Henry, 2007; Seligman, 2011). I then problematised and criticised this set of literature for its box-ticking, patronising tendencies that ignore wider structural issues beyond the individual that are at the root of wellbeing inequalities (Ahmed, 2013; Atkinson, 2013; Ehrenreich, 2010, Smith & Reid, 2018; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Further, I introduced a relational approach to wellbeing that looks at wellbeing as something that emerges between different human and non-human actors as an environment across time and spaces (Atkinson et al., 2019; Reid & Smith, 2018). Specifically, I have drawn attention to a range of different scales at stake within wellbeing research (see 1.1.2 and 2.5) and focussed on people, place and power as a way to show the breadth of interdependencies that contribute to our chances of being and becoming well (Atkinson et al., 2017). I then dwelled further on the theoretical implications of a relational approach and focussed on how a relational approach to wellbeing can generate new energies and possibilities for people and communities to thrive (Andrews, 2019; White, 2017). A dwelling lens (Galvin & Todres, 2011, 2013) stressed the importance of developing differentiated approaches towards people's idiosyncratic experiences that allow for dichotic and sometimes contradictory ways of being and becoming well, as both a sense of inward turning rest and outward turning adventure. Dwelling also brings into focus how the home is a complex nexus for different scales to intersect in meaningful ways that are reflective of our selves (Blunt & Dowling, 2006).

It is from these considerations that I have funnelled and developed the three research questions of this thesis. In the remainder of this sub-section, I refer back

to the research questions that have structured this thesis and lay out how each has been answered in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

6.1.1 Research Question 1

How can feminist epistemologies and 'queer tools' help us understand whose bodies produce what kind of wellbeing knowledge and how?

I tackled this question by developing an epistemological framework that brings into conversation different feminist epistemologies and philosophies of sciences (Ahmed, 2017; Haraway, 1991; Callard & Fitzgerald, 2015). I argued here that feminists have a unique point of view on bodies and affect, which are vital in order to understand how our personal struggles and dispositions might be indicative of wider structural inequalities. In order to challenge these structures, we need to propose alternative structures that are built with different kinds of tools that can be used by everyone (and not just by the masters) (cf. Lorde, 1984). It is with these tools that we can create environments for knowledge production that are more inclusive of diverse voices, experiences, dispositions, subjectivities and bodies. I suggested here six tools to frame more inclusive epistemic cultures in wellbeing research that help us understand whose bodies produce what kind of wellbeing knowledge and how:

- i) acknowledge that any finding is by definition incomplete and deeply situated in a specific body (body of flesh, body of knowledge, organisational body, institutional body);
- ii) expose and chip away at the walls that marginalised and disenfranchised knowers bump up against;
- iii) breaking up citational practices by assembling different bodies;
- iv) giving up fantasies of interdisciplinary mutuality and wilfully subjugating;
- v) insist that truthfulness matters;
- vi) collapse the distinction between ontology and epistemology and bring about change by way of knowing and enacting alternatives.

6.1.2 Research Question 2

How can a dwelling lens, both as a methodology and theory, help us better understand the complexly layered lived experiences of mental health service users and do justice to the entangled, complex ways of being and becoming well?

I answered this question by designing and implementing an arts-based method, referred to as 'Story Houses', which includes poem writing, working with materials and interviews. Inspired by traditions in phenomenological research, arts-based methods are a suitable tool for understanding the complex, differentiated experiences of vulnerable people and can help us understand their lived realities in a reflective and meaningful way (Bagnoli, 2009). I drew out four implications for implementing this method with mental health service users:

- i) *Dwell in the moment*, Story Houses can help their makers become mindful of the circumstances and experiences in the here and now
- ii) *Placing oneself- abstracting time and space*, Story Houses may contextualise the self in a wider spatially oriented relationships between self and environment
- iii) *Unfolding memories*, Story Houses can help us revisit memories from the past in a safe and controlled way
- iv) *(Re)thinking through metaphors*, Story Houses may provide a tool to creatively reframe experiences through different lenses, thereby uncovering new aspects of an experience.

Overall, as a methodology, a dwelling lens provides a way to guide method design and implementation in a way that allows us to understand complex experiences by drawing dichotomic distinctions and then actively unravelling them to understand how experiences move *between and across* two ends of a spectrum. As a theory, a dwelling lens presents itself as an analytical tool to help structure and interpret data in a way that does justice to the totality of experiences, looking at wellbeing than more than the black and whites of ill/healthy, alone/together, outside/inside.

6.1.3 Research Question 3

How does the personal dimension of dwelling relate to the political discourses of housing activism, and specifically the CLT movement?

In the first instance, I treated this question as a methodological one and developed a (dis-)integrative plural methodology that brought into conversation two heterogeneous data sets, that each spoke to a different dimension of dwelling. First, the analysis looked at inward-facing practices of dwelling and showed to what extent the home can provide shelter and how experiences of dwelling are structurally affected by political precarity. Second, my findings addressed the outward facing practice of dwelling and discussed how dwellers relate to others in their environment and the political momentum this may build.

In the second instance, I answered this question theoretically, by putting forward a concept I refer to as dwelling activism. Dwelling activism is a way to extend, and add nuance to, our understanding of the messy intersections and environments of feeling at home and housing activism more widely (but also the CLT more specifically). Dwelling activism can be seen as a lens towards conceptualising cross-scalar relationships that come together and unravel in and around the home. This is especially important for giving people a chance to be seen and heard in their respective communities, and specifically in low-income communities.

6.2 Drawing out implications for policy, practice and theory

This section draws out the overall implications of my dissertation for policy and practice. Inspired by my findings and tying back in some of the emergent themes in my literature review (Chapter 2), I draw out implications for two areas: urban (housing) policies and mental health and wellbeing policies.

6.2.1 Urban (housing) policies

This section suggests four policy directions for designing urban housing policies that foster wellbeing.

a) Fostering urban commoning for community wellbeing

In chapter 5, I briefly introduced some of the literature around urban commons in the context of community land trusts (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2013, 2016). The first implication for urban (housing) policies leans on this growing body of literature that stresses the possibility for more relational and process-oriented practices of building and dwelling, by ways of com(mon)ing together (Bunce, 2016; DeFilippis et al., 2019; Engelsman, Rowe & Southern, 2016; Foster & Iaione, 2015; Paton, 2013; Stravides, 2016). Specifically, I want to highlight here the recent work of Miriam Williams (2019) (see also Power & Williams, 2020) who argues that urban commons, like housing, must be understood as “more-than-property or bounded territory” (p.18), proposing a “nuanced approach to property ownership that looks beyond the category of public or private” (p. 17).

In line with my findings on dwelling activism (Chapter 5), housing policy makers then need to come to terms with the fact that their actions are not just abstract processes of forcefully ‘erecting’ blocks of buildings (see 5.2.2) but come with tangible consequences for the dweller’s psyche. In other words, policy makers need to understand housing beyond market logistics, namely as a social process (see 5.2.1 and also King, 2009) with measurable psychological effects (Chambers et al., 2018). I propose here that the urban common movement has powerful political momentum and can offer ways of bringing together different bodies (bodies of flesh, bodies of knowledge, organisational bodies see Chapter 3) that may hold different degrees of political leverage (Foster & Iaione, 2016). Bringing together heterogeneous (urban) actors can help foster belonging, sense of community, political voice and place stewardship, that allows communities to thrive on their own terms (see 2.5.1).

b) Assembling in care-full cities

Chapter 3 was concerned with the inclusion and exclusion of marginalized voices and pointed towards practices of coming together and making different voices heard. Assembly, for Butler, is a performative act of coming together that says: ‘we matter, too’ (see also 5.1). Assembling, then is a practice of caring for one self and another in the face of adversity (see 3.1.3, and Ahmed, 2007; Code, 2015). I suggest

that housing policies can learn from practices of assembly as a political act of giving a platform to muffled and silenced voices. Specifically, I link this to the idea of a care-full city (see 2.4.2 and Power & Bergan; 2018; Power & Williams, 2020; Williams, 2017, 2018) that to take the notion of care outside its domestic confines and proposes that care is a moral obligation of government officials and city makers (2.4.3). However, care also happens on minor, everyday levels by engaging with human and non-human environments around us; the stories of Hayley (Chapter 4 and 5) are a good example of this.

Translating these finding into practice, we can consider examples such as the happy city movement (Ballas, 2013; Montgomery, 2013); sensory adjusted autism-friendly cities (Davidson & Henderson, 2017) or dementia-friendly cities (Mitchell et al., 2003), that, by virtue of how they are designed, facilitate how and where marginalized voices *can* assemble. The café in Homebaked is also a good example of an everyday place of care that facilitates assembly, which, in turn, can become a political act (see 3.2.6 and 5.4.3). I propose here that urban housing policy makers interested in care-full cities need to pay attention to a multiplicity of scales (see 2.5.2), the private and well as the political practices of assembly. It is through the crisscrossing of these scales and the interjection of different bodies and environment that new political energies and community wellbeing emerges (see 2.6). One example of where this works is Trieste, a city in Northern Italy that pioneered a “whole system, whole community” approach for an integrative *mental health friendly city* and mental health friendly workplaces (Mezzina, 2014).

c) Dwelling-oriented housing

In line with the concept of a mental health friendly city, I propose a move towards mental health friendly housing, which, in line with my findings, I refer to as dwelling-oriented housing. Dwelling-oriented housing seeks to provide a stable and safe environment that takes into account the idiosyncratic experiences and needs of vulnerable people. I showed in Chapter 4 how experiences pertaining to home and housing are often complex and deeply imbued with subjective, cultural and social value. Further, Jacob’s understanding of his home as a tool for ‘modern thinking’ and social mobility (see 5.4.1) shows the importance of appreciating how the home is a place that is closely entangled with its dweller’s subjectivities. Mental

health friendly housing must, therefore, consider how people's individual experiences with their home and their individual needs are differentiated and tied to a person's unique circumstances (see 2.4.3 and Chambers et al., 2018).

Chapters 4 and 5 further highlighted the importance of understanding the home in terms of both, inside *and* outside; personal *and* political; retrieval *and* adventure. Policies for dwelling-oriented housing must account for these dichotomies to unravel. In other words, housing design needs to think beyond that what happens inside a house and consider the socio-material environment *around* the home, like the neighbourhood and affordances of the neighbourhood (Corcoran, forthcoming). My findings support the need for more inclusive and holistic housing schemes that take into account that good housing policies need to offer more than just one size fits all housing solutions. Instead, more dwelling-oriented housing policies would contextualise the house in its socio-material environments and also consider individual people's histories, needs and dispositions towards their home. This is already done by schemes like Housing First, who argue that once a person has a home, the rest will follow (see 2.5.2). But I suggest here that schemes like Housing First require a more nuanced understanding of their effects on wellbeing across different scales (Chambers et al., 2018).

d) Joint decision making for community engagement

Inspired by some of the discussions in Chapter 3 a final housing policy suggestion is concerned with what sort of voices and bodies usually participate in decision-making processes. I argue here that when meaningfully involving local residents into processes of public governance and urban planning that goes beyond tick-boxing exercises (Corcoran, Walsh & Marshall, 2017; Pennington et al., 2018), we may help foster what Putnam (1993) called civic communities (see 2.5.1), that is communities that have a sense of trust in one another and feel that they can relate to and belong in their neighbourhood. My findings in Chapter 5 have shown that having a feeling of being seen and heard is at the core of engaging 'disengaged', low-income communities. To make sure we are building houses with tools beyond the master's (Chapter 3), we, therefore, need to make sure to give the powerful tool of participation and joint decision making to typically excluded voices that usually remain silent behind power-infested walls (see 3.2.2 and Ahmed, 2017,).

6.2.2 Mental health and wellbeing policies

This section puts forward three policy directions for designing mental health and wellbeing policies.

a) Bringing mental health care into the home and the home into mental health care

My findings further suggest that the home can be a locus for being and becoming well. Translating this into practice then puts into question to what degree aspects of the home can be integrated into public mental health care settings, like hospitals. Leaning on my analysis of blurring the lines between personal and private in Chapter 5, I here suggest that we also need to blur the boundaries between hospital and home. That is to say, we need to continue to create ways in which staff can help people establish healthy routines in their domestic environments and outside a purely medical setting (see 2.4.1). This is already happening in parts of the country; Wellbeing Enterprises CIC, a community-run social enterprise in Liverpool (see Swift, 2017), for instance, are training community volunteers at local hospitals to help people transition in and out of hospital care with a continuous line of service provision. The role of social enterprises remains to be explored here (Swift, 2017).

On the other hand, the home can also be brought into mental health care. For instance, by integrating short-term beds in community health centers, that may act as temporary solutions for mental health service users in crisis¹⁰. From a design perspective, it may mean making medical places, like mental health centers, look less ‘medical’ and more ‘homely’; for instance, by decorating walls with patients’ art drawings or co-designing common spaces with users. Bringing the home into mental health may also mean to create more family-oriented environments in mental health care settings more generally (see 2.5.2) so people, and especially

¹⁰ Here we may also blur the distinction of whether someone is in housing crisis (i.e. they have no place to sleep) or whether someone is in a mental health crisis, experiencing acute stress or anxiety. More often than not, these two types of crisis would condition each other. A holistic and effective crisis intervention approach would perhaps not *need* to make a decision what ‘type of crisis’ someone might be in and what type of short-term care that might necessitate.

single parents and carers, can manage their home lives and care duties while at the same time being able to attend appointments, activities and check-ins¹¹.

b) People and place centred solutions: reflecting on the NHS's Five Year Forward View

Becoming more people and place centred starts with tracing out and understanding the complex subjectivities, needs, desires and experiences of individuals in their unique socio-spatial settings; finding out what matters *to them*. Wellbeing is never a single 'it' that awaits to be discovered and administered, instead my findings, in line with literature on relational wellbeing (e.g. Atkinson, 2013; Sointu, 2005), have shown how being well can mean many, sometimes even contradictory, things for people and may also change over time. For instance, Sylvia both wanted to be alone and together (see 4.5.1), Marcus and Hayley wanted to be active and outside, as well as introverted and inside see 4.5.2). A one-size fits all approach is not doing justice to how people's dispositions and capabilities can develop, adapt and change under neurobiological and hormonal propensities, changing personal circumstances, cultural context and unpredictable precarious political climates.

Putting this into practice means that policy makers and health professionals need to shy away from quick wins and easy fixes that have been immanent in the provision of mental health and wellbeing care to date (see Corcoran, forthcoming; Rose, 2019). This thesis opened up with a quote from the NHS's Five Year Forward Plan (2019 [2017]) which suggested that:

"Sometimes the health service has been prone to operating a 'factory' model of care and repair, with limited engagement with the wider community, a short-sighted approach to partnerships, and underdeveloped advocacy and action on the broader influencers of health and wellbeing."

With the NHS's Five Year Forward Plan still being implemented during times of political uncertainty and a quickly changing party line on health policies thanks to Brexit, it is hard to estimate what a relational approach to wellbeing might look like in the everyday running of the NHS. I want to highlight here again the temporal

¹¹ I took this specific idea from Nikolas Rose (2019, p. 182)

scales of wellbeing (see 1.1.2) and suggest that it indeed takes time to dwell with someone and find out what matters to them, this is especially true for vulnerable participants, for whom usual interview techniques may not be suitable (see Chapter 4). These interactions may involve alternative, creative or dwelling-oriented approaches towards inclusive participation which looks at the individual as a vulnerable human, rather than a fully rational, self-sufficient, neoliberal subject, like a patient, citizen, consumer (see 2.5.3; see also Dahlberg, Todres & Galvin, 2009). ‘Story Houses’ may be one way to do just that.

And so we must consider whether and how health care can move away from the NHS’s current ‘you’ve only got 10 minutes to tell your GP about all your feelings, vulnerabilities and challenges’- *modus operandi* (Flaxman, 2015) towards more inclusive, sustainable, emergent and slower interactions with mental health service users. My findings indicate that much can be won when truly appreciating the irrational, emergent, sometimes contradicting, idiosyncratic and messy complexities of people’s worlds.

c) Dwelling-oriented strategies for public and health services

However, not only collaborations with mental health service users must be considered with due complexity, time and creativity. We also need to consider the capitalistic, neoliberal and austere *modus operandi* that dictates the way we design public and community services more broadly (see 2.5.3 and 5.2.1). Recalling the case of Homebaked CLT in Liverpool: “that goal orientated thinking [...is...] a very ingrained capitalistic characteristic” and does not always lead to “successful” outcomes. And so: “*maybe sometimes the most radical thing is to sit down and not do anything...to put everything down and say ‘you know what...’*” (community organiser, Liverpool, Homebaked CLT)

In terms of social change and collective action for wellbeing, perhaps we need to redefine what our goals are. There seems to be a danger of setting goals that are too monolithic and end up looking like a quantifiable tick-box exercise which relational wellbeing scholars have criticized for being patronizing, short-sighted and distracting from persisting structural problems (see 2.4). Policy makers and professionals then ought to be able to bear these uncertainties and complexities

and withstand the need to homogenise or over-simplify other people's experiences into single outcomes. This might require a shift in the public imagination (Waddock, 2012) and public processes more generally which in turn requires trust and a sense of security and stability (see 2.3.3 and 2.5.1). This may be a chicken and egg problem, but it may also relate back to the idea of dwelling-mobility (see 2.6.1): a parallel or circular process in which our imaginations can branch out into new social imaginaries *because* there is a safe place to return to and that safe place is there because we have shown and mobilised alternatives (e.g. through the community land trust movement or other community wellbeing organisations that I recruited my participants from, see Appendix B).

6.3 Open questions and the future of wellbeing research

By the mere scope of what a Ph.D. can ever achieve, I had to limit my literature and analysis in scale and scope, despite, perhaps ironically, trying to make a point about needing to move across and beyond these scales and scopes. But over the course of the last four years, I have become increasingly aware of the political necessity to scale and scope wellbeing research even further than a societal, economic or political level. I am talking here specifically about the kind of planetary scales pertaining to global warming (Morton, 2013; Nancy, 2014) and the power-infested scales of artificial intelligence and big data. These scales are beyond our current theoretical understanding of wellbeing and even the world. This is because these scales are so big, catastrophic, complex, dense, de-centralised, irreversible and unpredictable that it is hard to measure or even fathom them. Despite their potentially catastrophic impact on us, researchers continue to not see these scales in all their magnitude (Bansal, Kim & Wood, 2018). So, for a moment, I want to take a step back and take a leap forward, because of the kind of pressing questions these challenges put towards what it means to live good and function well.

6.3.1 Artificial intelligence and big data

Our current generation is increasingly looking for happiness and wellness by using health and wellbeing apps or through self-tracking devices (Johnson et al., 2018). It

becomes increasingly impossible or perhaps undesirable to separate our 'real' lives from our 'virtual' lives; with the two becoming synonymous and so thinking about wellbeing without thinking about how and through which means future generations experience themselves and their wellbeing might be short-sighted.

But the internet is not a neutral space. Despite growing awareness of internet security and data protection, we find a host of hidden dimensions of inequality, especially in an age of internet surveillance where people's individual subjectivities become mere binaries—chains of data points, that can be sold on and manipulated to achieve certain purchase or voting behaviour (Kellogg, Valentine & Christin, 2020; Zuboff, 2019).

This is especially critical for more vulnerable or precarious internet users, who might not have the required tech literacy or health literacy to understand the inherent dangers in simply googling 'depression test', for instance. A recent report by Privacy International (2018) that investigated more than 100 mental health websites in France, Germany and the UK found that many of these websites share user data with third parties, including advertisers and large technology companies. But the way that people's information was being sold was "neither transparent nor fair and often lacked a clear legal basis".

There might be a danger of thinking wellbeing can be delivered as a single, technological solution. But there is not a short-cut to building and sustaining a rich web of meaningful relationships with one self and other human and non-human actors in our environment. People in power and that includes increasingly the global tech giants like Google, however, will continue to harvest data on our feelings, fears, aspirations and dispositions to create the perfect solutions for us (or them?) turning us into 'good consumers', 'good citizens' and 'good patients' (Dahlberg, Todres & Galvin, 2016). And so wellbeing research then needs to also become a tool for democratic education that tells a tale of caution, calling out the ones that misuse the term 'wellbeing' as way to camouflage their efforts to surveil and manipulate (Zuboff, 2019; see also section 3.2.5 on truthfulness in a post-truth era).

6.3.2 Global warming

A second question I want to raise here in the conclusion is: what is the role of global warming in our wellbeing? A recent study found that by 2100, 190 million people will be living in areas that are projected to be below sea level (Kulp & Strauss, 2019). Scientists predict that many cities and regions, especially those in the Global South, will become uninhabitable in the next 100 years because of flooding or landslides (ibid.). This will either mean that many inland cities will become overpopulated and equally uninhabitable due to resource scarcity, or, more likely, it will lead to unfathomable suffering and death right before our eyes.

In section 2.4 I already considered the efforts of post-human wellbeing researchers (Andrews, 2017, 2019; Andrews & Duff, 2019; McPhie, 2019) who contend how wellbeing might look like *after ecocide*, that is in a time when most of what we know as human life will have ceased to exist. I pointed out that wellbeing research might need to reconsider the role of time and legacy of wellbeing research. Indeed, there seems to be more to say about linking emerging issues in climate justice with wellbeing (Morton, 2018): What are the conditions of being well within a global catastrophe? Is it enough to only look after our own homes and communities, should we care more about other people's homes in the Global South? Whose wellbeing has priority, under which circumstances and towards what effects?

But global warming also poses some much more concrete challenges to the ways we can live in our cities, including those in which my research took place. And so we need to ask: Can our homes withstand extreme hot and cold temperatures? Are our homes equipped for floods, extreme winds and forest fires? Would we help our neighbours, or climate refugees from the Global South? Will homeless people survive on the street when weather conditions become extreme? And whose responsibility is it to build homes and cities that are climate resilient?

These are questions about the planetary scale of wellbeing that have a direct effect on our individual wellbeing. What this thesis tried to bring home is the idea that we cannot possibly look at these two different scales as two separated phenomena. We need to continue to push our efforts to understand complex, cross-scalar interdependences across time and space. On a practical level, we need to develop

place stewardship and hold each other accountable for our decisions, no matter which scales our decisions affect; in a web of relations we cannot not be affected by others. Because scales are not hierarchical (see section 1.1.2) action on a micro level might have consequences on a macro level, similar to a butterfly effect. Becoming aware of our own responsibilities towards ourselves, others and the planet, we can start thinking about alternative ways to live, care and come together. By showing that alternatives, like the commons movements, *do* exist we are already changing the current tenor. By knowing about others in the world in a caring manner (see 3.1.3), we already enact another way of being (Gibson-Graham, 2008). It is here where the possibilities for more equitable futures lie.

6.4 Concluding remarks

Overall, this thesis has shown how wellbeing is more than the sum of its parts and operates across a variety of scales across space and time. I offered different epistemological, methodological and theoretical frameworks that may help us trace out the ‘more-ness’ of wellbeing as something that emerges between and across different human and non-human actors, and their environments. But recalling Morton (2018, see 2.4.6) we can also argue that each part of the wellbeing assemblage (that is each and every individual, each and every home, each and every city, each and every knowledge institution) is already more than the sum of wellbeing because it holds within itself infinite possibility and ways of being and becoming well.

The three central chapters of this thesis (Chapter 3-5) never ‘screamed’ wellbeing, we were never able to put our finger at any single instance and confidently say: “ah, this is where it is!” Instead, notions, traces and possibilities of wellbeing tentatively emerged between the lines of this thesis as a field of possibilities that is bringing together different dispositions and subjectivities. In this thesis I leaned on two big theoretical ideas to do mobilise to do so: the concept of dwelling helped me to think about the different ways of coming together; to turn inwards and outwards in energetic yet vulnerable ways (see section 2.6.1). Feminist theory and epistemologies helped me develop a language with which we can hold accountable for the structural causes that continue to perpetuate systematic inequalities.

In addition to being a theoretical journey, my PhD journey was also *sweaty* journey through a complex, interdisciplinary concept: wellbeing (see Chapter 3, Appendix I and Appendix J, and Bal, 2009). Like bodies, concepts are not perfectly bounded, they leak and sweat onto questions and bodies they come into touch with (Ahmed, 2017). Sweaty concepts are not objective, absolute or detached (see Chapter 3), they tell the stories of a body (body of flesh, body of knowledge, organisational body) that does not feel at home in the world (Ahmed, 2017, p. 13). And so sweaty concepts throw up questions that surround them, specifically:

“they throw life up as a question. How do we know what diminishes us? How do we know when a life is working or not working? Who judges whether a life is working or not working? These are difficult questions, and our task is not to resolve them; they are life questions” (p. 195).

Wellbeing as a concept then, is not an abstract field of research that I have contributed to. Instead it has gained a life and body of its own, a “living creature, embedded in all the questions and considerations that the mud of your [concept] travel splattered onto it” (Bal, 2009, p. 14). I have sweatingly journeyed with the concept of wellbeing across multiple private, academic, institutional, global, local, political and social scales; or maybe wellbeing has journeyed with me. Either way, ‘wellbeing’ has become inseparable from who I am and the world I live in. But then again it could have never not been like that.

CHAPTER 7

References

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CHAPTER 8

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Pilot Study Story Houses

The method was tested in a pilot study with five of my friends and colleagues in April 2017. The participants were between 23-28 years of age, two females and three male. I also made my own Story House in the process. Even though the pilot participants were a more narrow demographic and had a different background in terms of their mental health history than the actual participants (at least as far as I knew), they offered relevant and nuanced insight into the making processes and were able to reflect on their own vulnerability throughout the process. Their honesty and empathy with the other possibly more vulnerable participants was crucial to improving my method. The pilot brought to my attention three crucial points of feedback:

- **From poem to story:** Grisoni's original method (2012) is entitled poem boxes. However, peers remarked that poems sound 'high-brow' and might be potentially off-putting in the recruitment process as writing poetry is perceived as something for a certain social class perhaps. They also remarked that my method seems to have considerably developed from Grisoni's and deserved its own name. On the basis of the feedback, 'Poem Houses' were changed to 'Story Houses' which was perceived as a more inclusive and inviting term.
- **Problems with poem writing:** The instructions for poem writing were perceived as difficult and too intellectual. Although all participants remarked that once they started they all 'got the hang of it' and were surprised how much they enjoyed the poem part of the exercise. They advised that I should keep the structured poem writing instructions but not to assume that people know what verbs, adjectives and nouns are. They also advised that a list of verbs and adjectives might be helpful. All of their recommendations were implemented.
- **Working with standardised white boxes:** I initially collected old shoe boxes and imagined that if they were decorated, it wouldn't matter what branding they had on them or what size they were (the results can be seen in Figure below). However, this was a wrong assumption as there emerged an element of competition in the pilot as to who would get the better boxes.

On EBay, I found simple white paper boxes that would standardise the method more and make it easier to work with the materials.



Figure 13 Pilot Study Story House

APPENDIX B: Recruitment for Story Houses

Through my work at the Heseltine Institute for Public Policy and Practice as well as my supervisors' various connections in the area, I was fortunate to quickly connect with key people in the wellbeing sector who acted as gate keepers to their respective communities. For the Story Houses I decided to work together with three different wellbeing organisations that operate in three different locations and who were keen to facilitate access to the people using their different services. The three organisations' common aim is to improve the lives of people who report low wellbeing, a feeling of loneliness or boredom, stress and anxiety and other diagnosed and undiagnosed (mental) health conditions. The first organisation which I refer to as 'Happy Lives' is a social prescribing service that runs a number of different short courses around community wellbeing in various community centres across the region. They collaborate closely with the local council and communities and their aim is to empower people by making them find something they are passionate about and connecting them to others. The second organisation is a mental health charity which, for the purpose of this research, is called 'Mental Health For All'. Their main aim is to educate the community on different mental health conditions and serve as a continuous support network for mental health patients by offering different groups and courses on their premises. There is also a community café and leisure area where anyone can drop in during working hours. This marks a difference to 'Happy Lives' whose service users often don't have a formally diagnosed conditions and usually only engage with each other during the few weeks of the respective course they are following. The third organisation, referred to as 'Community in Action', is an informal community drop in centre located in a central shopping area that offers a drop-in advice on everyday and wellbeing matters and connects people to the different organisations and services in the area.

Recruitment for 'Happy Lives'

With the help of the gate keeper, who is the company's manager, I joined two different courses at two different venues and handed out information sheets and sought informal contact with the attendees. I also passed around an email list where

I asked them if they would like to receive more information about making story houses and participating in my PhD research. For the first course five out of ten put their name and email on my sheet, and in the second course four out of eight put their name and email address down. Shortly after attending the course I contacted everyone who put their name down via email and thanked them for their interest, I also asked if they had any preferences as to time or place of the upcoming activity or if there might be anything else that they want to share or know. I received four replies in total that indicated a preferred time and place and I went about scheduling the activity at a time and place that seemed convenient for most. Unfortunately, that also meant that two people were not able to make it because of that. Ten days before the activity I also sent all participants an information sheet and consent form. Replies were sporadic and at the time it was unsure who would turn up. I sent a reminder email two days before the activity and only received two replies. However, I was pleasantly surprised that on the day four people turned up.

Recruitment for ‘Mental Health for All’

My gatekeeper has been very active in the community for about five years. He was a service user initially but now also facilitates one of the poetry groups, he showed a keen interest in my research and thought that the Story House activity might appeal to the poetry group as well as the writing group, who both meet weekly. I sent over more information about my research and explained what I would like to do in an email and he promised to check in with both groups to see what they think about it. After a couple of weeks I received an enthusiastic reply and I was invited to come and meet everyone in person. I thus joined both groups as a participant and then was allowed ten minutes to introduce myself in person and explain all about the Story Houses. This was a good opportunity to create a level of trust and meet everyone in person. I also had a chance to meet the professional poetry group facilitator for a coffee and ask her a few questions about the groups and some tips and tricks about facilitating poem writing.

The poetry group had seven group members at the time, all who were interested in joining, and the writing group had nine members, where all but two were keen in

joining the research. Three people were active in both groups. As we were planning for me to take up their group's weekly spot, I emphasised that anyone could come along without doing the activity or using their data and that they could decide later. At that point I handed out consent forms and information sheets to all potential participants and we decided on that day that it would be easiest if I just came back the week after to do the workshop for both groups. On the day of the activity, everyone showed up and on top of that two extra people joined who were not present the week before.

For both groups, I took them to one side and talked them through everything asking if they wanted to join but without pressuring them. I left the consent forms in the middle of the table and left it up to people to sign them or just leave them so not to put them in an awkward spot. In total, four people decided not to sign the form. That meant that twelve people out of sixteen people wanted to participate in the research. Because both groups knew each other very well, a lot of the activity was taken up by people chatting about everyday life. Although this was no problem as such, it did mean that the Story Houses were not finished in the 1.5 allocated. This is why, together with the groups and facilitator, we decided that I could come back the week after to finish the boxes with the groups. In comparison to the recruitment in 'Happy Lives' this way of recruitment was preferable because it established a deeper sense of trust and even a sense of friendship with the group (I even received a 'thank you card' from my participants at the end of this).

Recruitment for 'Community in Action'

The recruitment for this organisation took place through the manager of the organisation who I exchanged emails with and then met in person. He explained that there was not a regular or fixed group of people who meet and suggested that I could just 'set up camp' and see who would join on the day. Their drop-in services are organised around people's needs which means that they are very flexible and accommodating in terms of timings. I was nervous that I wouldn't be able to connect with the people prior to the activity and give them a chance to reflect on the activity and the consent they are giving. The manager, however, assured me that it would be fine but that I should also keep my hopes low. On the day of the

activity, I put up posters with the participants' information on the walls of the premises and also had a stack of forms printed out. I was worried about the ethics of not making it clear that this was a piece of research and not just a fun craft activity. I set up a small table in the middle of the shop and during the course of four hours six different people joined the activity with different levels of engagement.

This research includes two Story Houses from participants who had a chance to hear about my research in detail and gave explicit consent to take part by signing the consent form and then re-affirming this verbally at the end of the activity. There might be an advantage in casually setting up a table offering a fun activity, and it could be argued that people are more likely to engage in something more casual (Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2007). However, the ethical concerns of this type of engagement outweighed the benefits in this particular instance.

Reflections on recruitment for Story Houses

The above stories of the recruitment processes open up interesting questions about the balance of sample size over quality of engagement and involving harder to reach participants. Although the ethical research protocol has been followed as best as possible in all three instances, the above mentioned recruitment processes are very different and were highly dependent on my relationships with the gatekeepers.

The fact that the 'Mental Health for All' gatekeeper wasn't the manager but very much involved in the community meant that he had a good sense of the groups' vulnerabilities and the importance of building trust. It was a real privilege to take my time with the group and visit them on various occasions. In hindsight, I realised that I should have been more proactive with the other two organisations and make sure to embed myself more with the respective communities before recruiting for the Story House workshop. This might have meant that more marginalised participants felt more inclined to participate in my research which would have yielded a larger and perhaps more representative sample. Kindon, Pain and Kesby (2007) recognise this danger and warn that researcher might not do research 'with' but 'about' a group of vulnerable people if they don't integrate themselves in a participatory fashion into the respective communities before and during the

research process. They argue that not doing so poses a number of ethical dilemmas relating to power dynamics between researcher and participants.

In hindsight, I might have been better to take the recruitment process slower and rather than seeing it as a way to get a good sample, see it as an opportunity to get to know the people in the community. Running the workshops was a throw into the deep end and I was worried about possible risks of using a newly developed method, which hasn't been tested on vulnerable groups up to this point. This made me feel stressed and anxious at time and I might not have fully realised how that impacted on my confidence and motivation to thoroughly imbed myself with the communities. Even though it was interesting to gain perspectives from different geographical areas and organisations, the research wasn't designed to draw comparisons between these. This is why, on reflection, it might have been better to only focus on one or two organisations or communities. On the other hand, this would have meant a smaller sample size and it should be noted that I still got very interesting results from the communities were the recruitment was maybe less than ideal especially in regards to the participants' vulnerabilities.

APPENDIX C: Sample Story Houses

The sample for this study includes 18 Story House participants of which 10 were subsequently interviewed. Their ages range from early twenties to 75 years and older. All participants were White British, with males and females equally represented. The details of which are laid out in the table below. During the interviews and in informal conversations, the participants reported to suffer from a variety of mental health conditions including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

Two participants have identified themselves as being on the autistic spectrum. I decided not to include these conditions in the below table as it wasn't always clear to me how these conditions are affecting them in the present, whether they were self-diagnosed, whether they might have withheld certain information, whether there were other undiagnosed conditions at play that participants referred to as sadness, stress or loneliness, and, most importantly, if labelling people with their mental health conditions represent their lived experiences adequately in the first place (Spiegelberg, 1972) .

At the time of the research, as far as I was aware, none of the participants were in full-time employment, either because they were retired, received a carer's allowance, or were receiving disability living allowance. Nine out of the ten interview participants actively referred to various volunteering commitments or being a carer for their family members. Another common feature amongst participants was that only one participant mentioned that they were currently in a romantic relationship, while twelve participants stated that they were either single, divorced or widowed.

Name ¹²	Where recruited?	Demographic Group ¹³	Interview ?	If no, why?
Gary	Happy Lives	65-74 years old male	Yes	
Mick	Happy Lives	45-54 years old male	No	No email and wrong phone number
Patrick	Happy Lives	45-54 years old male	Yes	
Silvia	Happy Lives	66-64 years old female	No	Personal reasons and no time
Anna	Mental Health for All	35-44 years old female	No	Out of country during interview time
Carol	Mental Health for All	45-54 years old female	No	No interest
Claudia	Mental Health for All	55-64 years old female	Yes	
Daisy	Mental Health for All	45-54 years old female	Yes	
Frank	Mental Health for All	65-74 years old male	No	No interest
Hayley	Mental Health for All	25-34 years old female	Yes	
Jacob	Mental Health for All	35-44 years old male	Yes	
Kevin	Mental Health for All	55-64 years old	Yes	

¹² All names changed to pseudonyms.

¹³ Some age ranges are an estimate based on physical appearance and life history.

		male		
Marcus	Mental Health for All	25-34 years old male	Yes	
Margaret	Mental Health for All	25-34 years old female	No	No interest
Marvin	Mental Health for All	25-34 years old male	Yes	
Howard	Community in Action	75 years or older male	No	No interest
Laura	Community in Action	25-44 years old female	Yes, but unrecorded with notes taken	
Rachel	Community in Action	16-24 years old female	No	No interest
Total participants: 18	Happy Lives: 4 Mental Health for All: 11 Community in Action: 3	50% male 50% female	Total interviews: 10	

APPENDIX D: Sample CLT interviews

Urban CLTs contacted, May 2016

Contacted through <http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/get-involved/find-a-clt>), follow up through referral or personal contacts through research team

City	Name	Website	Agreed to interview?
Brighton & Hove	Brighton & Hove Community Land Trust	www.bhclt.org.uk	Yes
Bristol	Bristol Community Landtrust	http://bristolclt.org.uk/blog/contact-us/	Yes
Cambridge	Cambridge Living Future Community Vision	http://clfcvillage.org/contact-us/	No reply

Lancaster	The North Lancashire Community Land	http://www.communityland.org/who-we-are.html	No reply
Leeds	Headingley Homes Development Trust	http://www.headingleydevelopmenttrust.org.uk/homes	No reply
Leeds	LILAC (not officially a CLT but a MHOS (Mutual Home Ownership Scheme) and sympathetic to CLT	http://www.lilac.coop/	Yes
Liverpool	Granby4Streets	www.granby4streetsclt.co.uk	Yes
Liverpool	Homebaked CLT	www.homebaked.org.uk	Yes

London	Bixton Green	http://brixtongreen.org/contact-us/	No reply
London	Camley Street Neighbourhood Forum	www.camleystreetneighbourhoodforum.org.uk	Yes
London	Finsbury Park Community Hub	http://www.octopuscommunities.org.uk/get-in-touch/	No reply
London	Leathermarket JMB	http://www.leathermarketcbs.org.uk/contact-us/	No reply
London	Naked House Community Builders	http://www.nakedhouse.org/contact.html	No reply
London	Rooms of our Own	https://roomsofourown.wordpress.com/	Yes
London	Rural Urban Synthesis Society Ltd (RUSS)	http://www.theruss.org/contact/	No reply
London	London CLT	https://www.londonclt.org/	Yes

London	West Kensington & Gibbs Green Community Homes Ltd	https://westkengibbsgreen.wordpress.com/about/	Yes
Newcastle	The Ouseburn Trust	http://www.ouseburn.co.uk/contact/	No reply
Plymouth	Devonport CLT Ltd.	http://locality.org.uk/our-members/devonport-clt/	Yes

APPENDIX E: Interview Plan CLT interviews

Interview structure

The semi-structured interview is scheduled to take about an hour and is structured around the three main themes of this project:

Engagement with governance this refers to internal governance and administration of the CLT *and also* the way in which those key organizers in the CLT engage with other formal governance agencies, such as the local authority.

Managing assets – this refers to the tangible assets acquired by the CLT, understanding their formal value and also what the CLT will seek to do with these, such as leverage other assets, or whether more acquisition is to be sought.

Involvement with other campaigns and struggles – this refers to the levels of activism and agitation, and overall political consciousness to be found in the CLT, for instance if members of the CLT are active in other campaigns, not only centred on housing but on other types of struggle.

Theme	Questions	Sub Questions	Possible probes
(o) Introduction	<p><i>(0.1) Formalities</i></p> <p>Personal introduction, what we do, rationale of research, ethics/consent form</p> <p>START RECORDING</p>	Do you have questions or concerns about this research?	<p>Please tell me more about that.</p> <p>Can you tell me how you did that.</p> <p>Can you tell me what you did next.</p>
	<p><i>(0.2) Personal background</i></p> <p>Tell me about your role and function in your CLT.</p>	<p>How long have you been involved?</p> <p>How and why did you get involved?</p> <p>What does your CLT do?</p>	
(1) Engagement with government	<p><i>(1.1.) Internal</i></p> <p>What does “community” mean for you?</p> <p>Can you draw an organigram of your company- what different roles are there and who reports to whom? (have paper and pen ready)</p> <p>Can you give me an example of how a recent issues was brought up and a decision made?</p>	<p>If I were to sit in a typical CLT meeting, what sorts of debates would I be hearing?</p> <p>What would I have to do if I wanted to become a member of your CLT?</p> <p>Tell me more about a time when there was internal struggle or disagreement in your CLT, what happened and how did you resolve the situation?</p> <p>What makes your CLT special (in comparison with other CLTs or other housing organizations)?</p>	<p>Why do you think that happened?</p> <p>Can you give me an example of that kind of action?</p>

	<p><i>(1.2) External</i></p> <p>Outside your CLT, who are the people, authorities or organizations you have the most contact with?</p> <p>How do you normally approach and communicate with local authorities?</p> <p>What are the factors for successful cooperation with external decision makers?</p>	<p>To what extent are you depending on other organizations/decision makers?</p> <p>If you could change one thing in the way politics are run, what would it be and why?</p>	<p>Can you explain more about your reasons for arriving at that decision?</p> <p>What were the impacts of that action or decision?</p>
(2) Managing (tangible) assets	<p><i>(2.1) Finances</i></p> <p>How much can you tell me about the financial situation of your CLT?</p>	<p>How much property/land does your CLT currently own?</p> <p>If you had to put a number on your CLT, how much do you think it is worth at the moment?</p> <p>How much can you tell me about your CLT's debts or liabilities?</p> <p>Are there any (finance/business) documents that we could access?</p>	Is that a typical example of what happens in your CLT?
	<p><i>(2.2) Management</i></p> <p>How are you managing your assets and who manages them?</p>	<p>Can you tell me more about the sort of processes you had to go through when acquiring your most recent asset?</p>	

	How do you decide what new assets to invest in?	<p>To what extent are professionals (lawyers, consultants, bankers) involved in the running of your CLT?</p> <p>What is your relationship to these professionals?</p>	
	<p><i>(2.3) Future</i></p> <p>How will your CLT grow in the next 5, 15 and 30 years from now?</p>	<p>If you could turn back time, what would you have done differently in terms of asset management?</p> <p>What is the most valuable lesson you would like to share with other CLTs?</p>	
(3) Involvement with other campaigns and struggles	<p><i>(3.1) Political consciousness</i></p> <p>To what extent would you describe yourself as an activist?</p> <p>What motivates you to step up in your community?</p>	<p>When did you start becoming an activist and why?</p> <p>Why do you think some people are more involved in their communities than others?</p> <p>How do you think a sense of community typically emerges?</p>	
	<p><i>(3.2) Activism general</i></p> <p>What other causes are you passionate about?</p> <p>What personal qualities does an activist have to have?</p>	<p>Tell me more about other campaigns you are involved in. What is your role in these? Do they overlap with what you do in your CLT? Are there conflicts of interest between different campaigns/projects?</p> <p>Can anyone be an activist?</p> <p>If someone says “this is just a drop in the ocean”- what would you answer?</p>	

	<p>(3.3) <i>The role of women</i></p> <p>How do you evaluate the role of women in the running of your CLT?</p>	<p>Why do you think there are typically more women than men involved in managing CLTs?</p>	
(4) Closing	<p>Is there anything else you would like to add or share with other CLTs?</p> <p>Thank you!</p>		

APPENDIX F: Consent, consent forms and information sheets for Story Houses

According to the six key principles to ethical research outlined by the ESRC (2018), each Story House participant has been fully made aware of what taking part in this research means: i) their participation is voluntary and they can withdraw at any point, ii) what the risks and benefits are of their participation, iii) what the purpose of the research is, iv) how their data is protected, v) how the research design is transparent and follows standard ethics procedures, and finally vi) that the research is conducted independently. These key principles together with a detailed explanation of the interview/transcribing/data storage process have been explained to the Story House participants both verbally and in form of a consent form and information sheet (see below).



Committee on Research Ethics

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – Story Houses

Title of Research: Community Wellbeing and Community Organising

Researcher(s): Ms. Julia Zielke

Please initial boxes

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected.

3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information that are gathered during this research and I can also request the destruction of my story house or any other information relating explicitly to me, if I wish.

4. I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications.

5. I agree for the data collected during this research to be used in relevant future research.

6. I agree that pictures of my story house are being taken and used for the purpose of this research.

7. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant Name

Date

Signature

Name of Person taking consent

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Primary supervisor:
Dr Alan Southern
asouth@liv.ac.uk

Researcher:
Julia Zielke
j.zielke@liv.ac.uk

Consent Form – Story Houses – Version 1.1
March 2017



Participant Information Sheet for Story Houses
Community Wellbeing and Community Organising

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask us if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your friends, relatives and community organisers if you wish. We would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.

Thank you for reading this.

Who is doing the research? This research is conducted by me, Julia Zielke, as part of my PhD research at the Heseltine Institute for Public Policy and Practice and my funding comes from the University of Liverpool Management School. My research is supervised by Alan Southern (asouth@liv.ac.uk) and Rhiannon Corcoran (corcoran@liverpool.ac.uk). For this research I have also obtained a full CRB disclosure and you can ask me for a copy of that.

What is the purpose of the study? This research wants to explore if and how communities effect people's wellbeing. In detail, we want to look at the ways that people become part of a community and what that means for social empowerment.

Why have I been chosen to take part? As a member of a wellbeing community you will have a lot of experiences with the sort of things that make you and others feel better and why. I want to find out more about that so that we can help others feel better too.

Do I have to take part? No, your participation is voluntary. That means you can say stop at any point without having to give a reason and there will be no negative consequences for you if you decide to drop out. Results up to the period of withdrawal may be used, if you are happy for this to be done.

What will happen if I take part? You will become a participant in one of my case studies for my PhD, namely building story houses. Story houses are a craft activity but also a creative research method that uses different materials and words to make sense of people's experiences. In my research I want to make sense of people's wellbeing and how they connect that to the metaphor of 'home'. At the end the activity, I will take your creations home so I can better look at them. Although at the end of the research you can ask for them back. I will also take pictures of them, which might be used in my research. At the end of the research I can send you a report that summarises the findings of my research. Feel free to get in contact with me in the meantime, though!

Are there any risks in taking part? Thinking about your own wellbeing can be tough and you might remember times when you felt much worse than now. If you think this is getting too much, you can always leave the research, or chat to me or someone else off the record so to say. We do our very best to make sure you will feel as safe and comfortable as possible.

Are there any benefits in taking part? Your experiences will help us understand better what sort of things work for community wellbeing. Researchers, community organisers and local councillors can then use your insights to improve their services to help more people in better ways. You might also learn more about your own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others; this can help you to identify steps to improving your wellbeing.

What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem? If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let us know by contacting the primary supervisor, Alan Southern, at asouth@liv.ac.uk and we will try to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with then you should contact the Research Governance Officer at ethics@liv.ac.uk. When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

Will my participation be kept confidential? Yes! All data is anonymised, that means your name or any identifying factors of yourself (your age, where you are from, your work, etc.) will not be known to anyone that is not the researcher. All data will be deleted five years after the end of the research. If you share anything with me that will put you or others in serious, immediate harm, then I might need to discuss that with one of the community organisers and identify further steps. Everything will be stored on a secure server that is password protected.

What will happen to the results of the study? After the study I will have a lot of data and unfortunately I can only use a very small part of that for my findings. My results will be published in my PhD thesis which will be made publicly available after publication. I might also use some of my findings in academic papers or present them at academic conferences or civic engagement events. My findings will also be shared with relevant organisation so that they may improve their services and use my evidence to apply for more funding. At the end of my study, I will also share my findings with the different participants. No one reading the final report will be able to identify who has taken part in the study because all the data is anonymous and securely kept.

Who can I contact if I have further questions? If you have any questions or concerns, you can write an email to Julia to j.zielke@liv.ac.uk, chat to me whenever you see me around or contact a member of staff of Wellbeing Enterprises.

APPENDIX G: Consent, consent form and information sheet for CLT interviews

This research was carried out through an umbrella project entitled Urban Futures, led by Alan Southern.

According to the six key principles to ethical research outlined by the ESRC (2018), each interview participant has been fully made aware of what taking part in this research means: i) their participation is voluntary and they can withdraw at any point, ii) what the risks and benefits are of their participation, iii) what the purpose of the research is, iv) how their data is protected, v) how the research design is transparent and follows standard ethics procedures, and finally vi) that the research is conducted independently. These key principles together with a detailed explanation of the interview/transcribing/data storage process have been explained to the participants both verbally and in form of a consent form and information sheet (see below).

Committee on Research Ethics

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research
Project: Urban Futures

Researcher(s):
Dr Alan Southern
Dr Mike Rowe
Julia Zielke

**Please
initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated March 2016 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.
4. I would like my name used and I understand and agree that what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised.
5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant Name

Date

Signature

Name of Person taking consent

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Principal Investigator:

Name	Dr Alan Southern
Work Address	Management School, University of Liverpool, Chatham Street, Liverpool.
Work Telephone	0151 795 2556
Work Email	asouth@liv.ac.uk



Participant Information

Community Organizing and the Social Economy

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, please ensure that you understand the purpose of the research and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and feel free to request any further information or clarification. Please also take time to discuss it with your fellow officers. We would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to. Thank you for reading this.

Research Purpose: We are interested in understanding how community organizing supports the social economy, in what ways and how activists change when they become involved in organizing. This will help us to evaluate organizing as a political act as well as it being a managerial operation and will help us to understand how communities manage their asset base. The objective of this work is to look at the way community assets are secured and controlled in the context of the social (and solidarity) economy in urban communities in England. For this purpose, our focus here is specifically on community land trusts (CLTs) and similar housing initiatives.

We may ask you about three particular areas relevant to how your organisation has organised: (i) the internal governance of your organization and the way community or organizational representatives engage with other formal governance agencies, such as the local authority; (ii) the asset base of the community organization and how it is managed and (iii) how your organization is involved with other campaigns of importance to the community.

Research Participants: We wish to interview those active in the communities we are researching. This may include local residents, community representatives, businesses, councillors and public officials.

Do I have to take part? Participation is voluntary. Should you choose not to be interviewed, this will not be recorded in our research. Should you agree to participate, you can, at a later stage, withdraw your consent and any data gathered up to that point will be destroyed.

What does participation involve? We will interview you and may ask for clarification of points at a later date. This might involve us asking if we can speak with you again. These interviews will normally be recorded. However, if you do not wish to be recorded, hand written notes will be taken. Interviews will last about one hour. We will ask you about your perceptions of the community in which you live/work and specifically about your organising. The data will be retained only for the purposes of this study.

How will you benefit from participation? Participation will provide the opportunity to think about and reflect on the ways in which you act in your community and/or duties. We will also wish to share the emerging findings with participants at regular workshops that will provide an opportunity for you to feed back on our emerging findings and conclusions. Our experience is that the opportunity to reflect and discuss the ways in which you operate will prove valuable for you.

Confidentiality: Your name will not be recorded alongside notes or recordings of interviews. We will record your role, but not your organisation, position or any other identifying information. However, should you wish, you may opt to have your name and organisation disclosed in connection with this research, for example for the purposes of good practice case study publications. In such cases, you will be consulted on any draft of the paper/publication and may withdraw your consent should you be unhappy with the way you/your organisation is presented. All data will be stored securely on University servers and will be destroyed five years after the completion of this study. Where material you provide is used in subsequent reports or publications, a pseudonym will be used. Should you wish, you may have a copy of the transcript of your interviews.

How will the results be used? The research will inform academic papers and reports. We will also seek opportunities to share any learning from the work with relevant local agencies.

Researchers involved in this work:

Dr Alan Southern
Dr Mike Rowe
Julia Zielke

Further information and contact: Should you have any queries or require further information, contact the Principal Investigator, Dr Alan Southern (asouth@liv.ac.uk).

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let us know by contacting Dr Alan Southern at the University of Liverpool Management School (asouth@liv.ac.uk) and we will try to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with then you should contact the Research Governance Officer on 0151 794 8290 (ethics@liv.ac.uk). When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

APPENDIX H: Risk assessment

Community Wellbeing and Community Organising

Risk Assessment

Version 1

03/12/2016

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This risk assessment applies to all the different methodologies referred to in the ethics application 737.

Risks to Participants

General risk reducing action: Because this research deals with vulnerable individual, utter care must be taken to minimise risks. Therefore, participants should be fully willing to participate in this research and be made aware of the sensitive and personal nature of the research topic. Sincere effort must be taken to ensure that participants were not coerced or deceived into taking part in this research.

A standardised form that participants need to fill out at the beginning of each course/workshop borrows from the Edinburgh-Warwick Mental Health scale and provides good assessment of the mental health condition of the individual). This form is already tried and tested by the partner organisation who have a detailed record of all their patients on file, thus being able to track any negative developments in their mental health and wellbeing. Wellbeing Enterprises CIC do not treat people with severe mental health difficulties and always refer complex or severe cases to trained medical professionals; once referred, Wellbeing Enterprises CIC check up on their clients, mostly through a telephone conversation, to make sure they are receiving the right care. After the data has been gathered, participants will be debriefed and possible harm that has occurred during the research process can be identified and dealt with appropriately, for example, through referring them to specialised services.

No.	Risk	Probab-ility (L,M,H)	Impact (L,M,H)	Effect on Participants and Project	Risk Reduction	Actions	If it happens: Triggers & Actions
1	Risk of evoking negative emotions or unpleasant experiences causes psychological distress or unpredictable behaviour.	Medium	High	The participants might decide to withhold crucial information or provide misleading information which can cause a falsification of data. Participations might also decide to drop out. If this happens in aggregation, then the continuation of the project is under threat.	<p>A comfortable, non-judgmental and safe environment is provided. If group activities take place, then a code of practice is discussed; i.e. group members are asked what makes them feel safe (i.e. do not interrupt others, they can leave the room whenever they want to, no mobile phones, no judgment, no cursing, etc.)</p> <p>Community interaction and different artistic activities are proven to increase people's wellbeing. Therefore, the overall research make-up is designed to help people feel better (e.g. having a sense of mastery and feeling in control of one's environment). This can help participants to build more resilience towards possible triggers and significantly minimises risks of lasting distress.</p>	<p>Triggers</p> <p>A negative memory or particular interaction causes psychological distress.</p> <p>Actions</p> <p>In agreement with a member of the partner organisation, it will be decided on a case to case basis whether the participant should continue the study. Further, the participant is referred to specialist services, if necessary, e.g. counselling. If appropriate, the researcher will find out the specifics of the trigger to avoid future harm.</p> <p>The researcher will aim to end the project on a positive and encouraging note and highlight the benefits of this study.</p>	

No.	Risk	Probab-ility (L,M,H)	Impact (L,M,H)	Effect on Participants and Project	Risk Reduction	Actions	If it happens: Triggers & Actions
2	Risk of physical harm.	Low	Medium	<p>The participants might hurt themselves by using the different materials provided in different craft activities (poem houses).</p> <p>They are also at risk of everyday hazards, such as slipping on the floor.</p> <p>Participations might also decide to drop out. If this happens in aggregation, then the continuation of the project is under threat.</p>	Standard health and safety protocols will be adhered to. Care will be taken to have a first aid trained member of staff present.		<p>Triggers Accident occurs.</p> <p>Action Depending on the severity, a first aid trained member of staff can take care of minor ailments or an ambulance will be called.</p>

No.	Risk	Probab-ility (L,M,H)	Impact (L,M,H)	Effect on Participants and Project	Risk Reduction	Actions	If it happens: Triggers & Actions
3	Risks on compromising participants' personal relationships and community cohesion.	Low	High	The participant might ostracise themselves in their respective community due to disclosing information or showing unsocial behaviour. This could severely disrupt the community dynamics and can cause the community to fall apart or it can cause an individual to be excluded from a community. This will have severe effects on the community wellbeing and could mean that the research with that particular community will have to discontinue.	A comfortable, non-judgmental and safe environment is provided. If group activities take place, then a code of practice is discussed; i.e. group members are asked what makes them feel safe (i.e. do not interrupt others, they can leave the room whenever they want to, no mobile phones, confidentiality, no judgment, no cursing, etc.) Community interaction and different artistic activities are proven to increase people's wellbeing. Therefore, the overall research make-up is designed to help people feel better in their communities (e.g. having a sense of mastery and feeling in control of one's environment). This can help participants to build more resilience towards possible triggers and significantly minimises risks of lasting distress.		Trigger Feeling angry or dissatisfied with individuals or a community. Action The researcher will try to intervene as soon as other participants act unfairly, unsocially or in any way dismissive of others. They will point towards code of practice, i.e. no cursing, no judgment, confidentiality, etc. and remind all participants of the importance of being respectful towards each other. If an individual continues to be disruptive, then measures will be taken to talk to that individual in person and it will be decided on a case to case basis how to proceed.

No.	Risk	Probab-ility (L,M,H)	Impact (L,M,H)	Effect on Participants and Project	Risk Reduction	Actions	If it happens: Triggers & Actions
4	Risk of confidentiality/Management of research data	Low	High	The research data, which is highly sensitive, is stored in such a way that confidentiality and data protection are paramount. If data confidentiality, however, was breached, then this could have devastating effects on the university's and researcher's reputation, as well as the reputation of the host organisation. Most of all, it could have devastating consequences for the participants, who might feel betrayed, embarrassed and it could also have an impact on their private and public life.	All data must be anonymised and a code of aliases stored separate to the data; this includes names of participants, host organisation, other organisation or community groups and specific place names. All identifying information will be left out or altered slightly (e.g. stating age range, rather than specific ages). All data is stored password protected in a university owned server. The researcher's laptop and work computer is password protected, and computers or laptops will not be left unattended.		Trigger Hacker breaks into server or my passwords are stolen. Action Talking to university's security and IT expert and deciding together with supervisors what is the best course of action.

Risks to Researcher

No.	Risk	Probab-ility (L,M,H)	Impact (L,M,H)	Effect on Researcher and Project	Risk Reduction	Actions	If it happens: Triggers & Actions
1	Risk of physical threat or abuse.	Low	High	The researcher might need to undergo medical treatment including possible hospitalisation as a consequence of physical abuse. Research might need to be paused or	Participation is voluntary and it is taken uttermost care that the participants feel comfortable and safe so that any risk of feeling		Triggers A certain memory can trigger negative associations and participants could project their

No.	Risk	Probability (L,M,H)	Impact (L,M,H)	Effect on Researcher and Project	Risk Reduction	Actions	If it happens: Triggers & Actions
				all together ceased depending on the severity of the event.	threatened or uncomfortable are reduced to a minimum. And although participants are dealing with different mental health problems, none of their issues are classed as severe as classified and assessed under the Warwick Edinburgh Scale. Therefore, unexpected or aggressive behaviour is not very likely. Moreover, there will always be another member of the organisation present who can intervene if necessary.		negative emotions onto the researcher. Actions The situation will be de-escalated through verbal interaction as is appropriate.
2	Risk of psychological trauma, as a result of actual or threatened violence or the nature of what is disclosed during the interaction.	Low	High	If risk No. 1 occurred, then the researcher could become traumatised or otherwise too afraid to deal with unpredictable temperaments of individuals. This might mean that the researcher needs to seek professional help which could possibly prolong the research process. If the researcher continues to feel uncomfortable in her research environment, then the research proposal might need to be altered. The researcher might further experience feeling of stress or even depression as the information	To minimise the psychological risks on the researcher, care will be taken to create a safe and comfortable research environment, for example by creating a friendly and informal rapport with participants and talking to friends, fellow PhD students, supervisors and members of the organisation about possible stress factors (of course, without disclosing personal details about participants). The university's wellbeing and chaperon services should be approached if any of these risks factor start arising. Further GP		Trigger Risk no. 1 occurs Nature of research becomes too stressful. Actions Talk to member of organisation, supervisors, or other researcher who will have dealt with similar experiences and can offer advice. Talk to wellbeing services or GP.

No.	Risk	Probab-ility (L,M,H)	Impact (L,M,H)	Effect on Researcher and Project	Risk Reduction	Actions	If it happens: Triggers & Actions
				disclosed could be very moving and the epistemological positioning of the research assumes that the researcher cannot possible assume an objective stance on the research matter.	services are available to discuss the mental health of the researcher, if necessary.		
3	Risk of being in a comprising situation, in which there might be accusations of improper behaviour.	Low	High	In a stressful situation, the researcher might make a wrong judgment which could lead to the participants raising concerns or complaints. This could lead to additional reflections on discussions, either with the researcher's supervisor or, more formally, through the research committee. This could cause delays in the progression of the research.	General common sense measures will be taken to treat others with respect and dignity. The researcher will create a non-judgmental atmosphere and will aim to develop a friendly yet professional rapport with the participants. Research diaries and talking to friends, co-researchers and other supervisors can help to reflect on the researcher's positionality and discuss arising ethical issues.	Trigger Responding inadequately or unethical. Action Addressing the situation with supervisors and responsible staff at host organisation, identifying suitable action on a case by case basis.	
4	Increased exposure to risks of everyday life and social interaction, such as road accidents and infectious illness.	Low	High	Injuries of different severity could lead to being unfit to continue research.	Common sense precaution should be taken.	Trigger Accident happens Action Depending on severity, seeing GP or calling an ambulance.	
5	Causing psychological or physical harm to others	Low	High	The researcher might need to cease the project due to improper behaviour.	Being reflexive and kind and adhering to common sense principles. Reflecting on and understanding a person's particular	Trigger Harming another person due to different unforeseeable triggers. Action	

No.	Risk	Probab-ility (L,M,H)	Impact (L,M,H)	Effect on Researcher and Project	Risk	Reduction	Actions	If it happens: Triggers & Actions
					vulnerability can further help to reduce the risk of psychological harm.			Identify scope of harm done and seeking guidance from supervisors or staff members of partner organisation.

APPENDIX I: From disciplinarity to interdisciplinarity – a quick history of social sciences research

In this brief overview I will lay out how epistemic cultures throughout time have influenced the formation of disciplines and the advance of non-linear and interdisciplinary knowledge making. The history of knowledge making starts with Plato (427—347 B.C.E) who discerned episteme (knowing) from doxa (opinion), techne (technology) and ars (art). At around 300 BCE the Roman Stoa distinguished logic, physics, and ethics as three different areas of inquiry. A jump forward in time, the Middle Ages established a much more comprehensive system of knowledge where they distinguished grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, music, geometry and astrology as separate disciplines. The advance of empiricism and inductive methods, heralded by scholars such as Galileo and Francis Bacon, marks the beginning of the Scientific Revolution in the first half of the 17th century.

During the Enlightenment and with the rise of universities, knowledge formation became institutionalised and increasingly independent from the influences of the Church. Scholars, like Diderot were obsessed with classifying and filing all available knowledge. The *Encyclopédie* (compiled 1751-1772), a collaboration of 150 European top scholars at the time, is considered to be a key example of this period. With a short-lived claim of having accumulated the totality of available facts, it features detailed articles on church pews and candles, for example. At around the same time, natural scientist Linnaeus set himself the task to classify all species into his *Systema Naturae*. In a number of years his book quickly grew from 10 to 2300 pages of detailed botanical observation (Weingart, 2012, p. 5).

Around the turn of the 19th century the sheer complexity and diversity of available data started to push the boundaries of traditional methods of data collection and a shift from spatialized to temporal science writing occurred: whereas previously scholars were concerned with mapping and adding up occurrences in the natural world, now their attention focussed toward processes and relations. Knowledge became abstracted and science enmeshed in a web of relations over time. By the mid- 19th century, universities had a key organisational role in this development in

that they established criteria for rigour and originality and encouraged the formations of specialisations (Bowler & Morus, 2010; Weingart, 2012).

Around the 1930s the Chicago School was one of the first institutions to push for an interactionist framework and cooperation between disciplines, which led to the birth of new disciplines like social psychology or political sociology (Klein, 2012). Shortly after the Second World War, universities started teaching integrated social sciences courses on, for instance, crime, area studies, or the environment. This actively brought together scholars from a number of departments and faculties and encouraged collaboration beyond one discipline (*ibid.*).

In the late 20th century universities further encouraged academic specialisation. Weingart (2012, pp.10) illustrates that between 1950 and 1980 the average academic multiplied the number of their specialisations ten-fold. In the early nineties, social and global pressures necessitated more collaboration between different sciences. As a consequence, trans-disciplinary research centres focussing on for example gender studies or climate change attracted considerable funding and grew swiftly. In their influential book 'The new production of knowledge' Gibbons and colleagues (1994) argue that social and economic factors outside the university considerably influence the way that research is shaped; they call this Mode 2 knowledge. If Mode 1 is modelled on a norm-driven Newtonian world view, Mode 2 knowledge is non-linear, heterogeneous, complex and trans-disciplinary and is argued to also grow outside academia. A similar ethos is echoed in Thomas Kuhn's canonical work on paradigm shifts, arguing that science making is not accumulative or linear, but depends on intellectual and social climates and available research tools in a given historical contexts.

In the social sciences and humanities, anthropologist Clifford Geertz is argued to be one of the first truly interdisciplinary researchers (Bergland, 2017; Klein, 2012) whose theories were widely used and cited outside his own discipline. Klein (2012) observes a notable shift from social scientists' understanding from a law-and-instances towards a case-and-interpretation approach to societal problems. With the institutionalisation of post-positivist, post-structural, social constructivist and critical theories, interdisciplinary research in the social sciences further heralded

interdisciplinary collaborations with scholars in the humanities and beyond (Klein, 2012).

Today, the advance of the neoliberal university redefines the research agenda of many universities that design their curricula to mirror the demands of the global economy, where counting comes before content and “writing becomes an instrumental skill rather than an epistemological experience” (Mountz et al., p. 1241, 2015). A feminist research collective consisting of Alison Mountz and her ten colleagues (ibid.) argue that the knowledge presented in institutions also needs to be understood as that what it is not. In other words, inherent academic elitism prevents certain academic voices to participate in institutionalised knowledge making because of gender, race, age, country of origin or socio-economic status.

In a neoliberal academic climate, the formation of interdisciplinary research projects must be seen critically. Yes, it is exciting that new alliances between theories are fostered and societal problems explored through different angles, universities are able to hone a critical edge over their competitors, and train staff and students to think holistically about complex problems; however, specialisation also comes at a price. Manufacturing the most employable graduate, conforming to REF norms and keeping up in a global market, takes the brute force of the growth paradigm (efficiency, lean knowledge production streams, high and quick turn over, making money at all costs) without the built-in regulators, like overtime compensation, annual leave or sick leave. Unsurprisingly, this leads to stress and anxiety amongst staff and students and actually inhibits critical scholarship and the slow production of knowledge (Mountz et al., 2015).

The history of knowledge making gives us a quick glimpse into what different epistemic communities have valued in their historic contexts and how the production of knowledge in today’s society has reached a point of resistance. It is not so much the future of discipline specific knowledge that becomes precarious at this point but the very mechanism under which they operate and produce interdisciplinary knowledge. This socio-epistemic and institutional background is a crucial background to any emergent interdisciplinary area of research

APPENDIX J: A note on institutional belonging

With the question of concepts also comes the question of whose concepts am I referring to, whose department, whose discipline, whose canons (again, much more on that in Chapter 3). For now, the reader might, however, wonder what discipline I belong to. With a BA in Liberal Arts and an MRes in Human Geography, ending up doing my Ph.D. at a Management School and (on paper at least) at a Policy Research Institute with joint supervision from a clinical psychologist and an economic geographer, I found it very difficult to say where I belonged. Was I a geographer, a management scholar, a mental health researcher, a policy researcher or a sociologist?

These questions became increasingly pressing when I had to think about ‘my audience’. Which journals should I publish in? What conferences do I go to? And what is the background of my thesis examiners? What are their expectations? Will they ‘get’ me or it? At one point not being able to find a perfectly prepared disciplinary nest was very stressful for me; I felt uprooted and lost, feeling like I constantly had to justify and explain myself. The embodied experience of working with a sweaty concept across different disciplines in a neo-liberal, highly pressurised education environment (Mountz et al., 2015) was emotionally draining and threw up so many existential questions: Where is my career going to go? What canons, academic jargon and expectations do I sign up for when entering this or that disciplinary arena? Where is the funding at that pays my bills? What matters to me most? Who am I?

As Ahmed (2017) would say, these are life questions, and it is not our task to resolve them. And so by the end of writing this thesis, I had to get comfortable with the idea of not having an institutional home, not finding a sense of belonging through a Ph.D. title or job title¹⁴. In reflection, this only made sense and is perhaps indicative of that what I want to say with the thesis more broadly: feeling comfortable with yourself is coupled to a sense of dialectical movement, never

¹⁴ Although I now do have such a title, namely as lecturer in sociology, a title I was allowed to invent myself and chose because it seemed to be the most non-specific descriptor of saying I am interested in social processes.

succumbing to simple answers and always unfolding together with other bodies across time and space.